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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the representation of the human body through the literature and art of early India. From its beginning, Indian art has employed an uninterrupted iconic mode of representation that focuses on an anthropomorphic mimesis to describe desire, devotion, and ascetic denial. The paper focuses on the earliest such representations of the body in religion, art, and literature as background to the iconographic development in India. (EH)

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Ancient India and the Body

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ANCIENT INDIA AND THE BODY

SUBMITTED TO: DR. P.J. LAVAKARE
BY: WILLIAM WOLAK
FINAL PROJECT
UNDERSTANDING INDIA AND HER ETHOS
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ANCIENT INDIA AND THE BODY

The most appealing aspect of Indian civilization is its zestful, life-affirming sensuousness which permeates its literature, artifacts, and rituals. The sensual rasa developed in a love poem by Kalidasa, the kinetic vibrancy of a Siva Nataraja statue, the erotic coupling on a temple wall in Khajaraho, and the ordinary *puja* offerings involved in everyday Hindu worship, all reflect a culture steeped in a direct appeal to the senses. Diana Eck, for instance, considers *darsan* or "seeing" of the deity to express "the central act of Hindu worship" (Eck 3). The graphic immediacy of the ritual image presupposes that there is something divine which can be seen. Unlike the West which incorporated a heavily aniconic tradition from Judaism and Islam with the representational traditions of Greece and later Christianity, India from the earliest Indus Valley civilization to the brass Kali statue made last week has employed an uninterrupted iconic mode of representation which focuses on an anthropomorphic mimesis to describe desire, devotion, and ascetic denial. The earliest such representations of the body in religion, art, and literature will be explored as a background to the iconographic development in India.

The Indus Valley Civilization

The achievements of the Indus Valley civilization are impressive. The inhabitants of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were a literate people who lived in multi-story brick houses with bathrooms (Kosambi 54). The cities they populated were marvels of town planning when compared to the sparing development of their contemporary counterparts in Sumer and Egypt; Indus Valley cities contained straight streets meeting at right angles, drainage systems, enormous granaries, a sophisticated division of labor, bronze age metals, trade with surrounding states, and ziggurats for worship (Kosambi 54-69). Much later, the *Vedas* describe these Indus Valley inhabitants as dark skinned, snub-nosed and as believing in phallic worship (Zaehner 15). Unfortunately, their written works, which consist of brief inscriptions of pictographic script on their seals, have not yet been deciphered, and little of their art work has survived (Basham, *The Wonder That Was India, 14-18).* However, what has been unearthed can be classified into two anthropomorphic types: various terra cotta Mother goddesses and an ithyphallic, horned god seated in a yogic posture. A. L. Basham describes the Mother goddesses as "broad hipped" women with fantastic

headdresses who probably represent the fertility of the earth (*The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, 4). On the other hand, Basham describes the male god associated with phallic worship in this way:

> The horned god appears to be ithyphallic; it is generally accepted that he has traces of two faces in profile, as well as that facing the observer; he is surrounded by animals - an elephant, a rhinoceros, a buffalo, a tiger, a long-horned goat - and his legs are bent in a difficult posture, with the soles of the feet pressed together, known to later yogins as *utkatikasana*. These facts have led to his identification as the prototype of the later Hindu god Siva...(4).

In fact, on the largest of the seals upon which the horned god is depicted surrounded by four wild animals, beneath his stool stand two attentive deer reminiscent of the representations of the Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath (Basham *The Wonder That Was India, 23*). Thus, the Mother goddess and the ithyphallic, horned god, both of which appear naked unlike the earliest sculptures of clothed Sumerian priests or the modestly attired gods, goddesses, and priests of Egypt, represent the most prevalent representations of the body in the earliest Indian civilization.

The Aryans

Sometime between 4000-1000 B.C.E., a nomadic group of tribes invaded and eventually completely displaced the people of the Indus Valley civilization (Zaehner 14). These invaders called themselves *Aryas* which later became Anglicized into Aryans. The displacement was gradual. It was brought about by many tribes invading for thousands of years. Compared to the people of the Indus Valley, these invaders were barbarians who were illiterate, did not build with stone or brick, had no notion of city life, and had no advanced economic system. However, what the Aryans had developed that made them militarily superior to the decidedly more peace-loving inhabitants of the Indus Valley included the use of horses, chariots, and the development of superior bronze for weapons (Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, 37).

The Vedas

Besides their bellicose qualities, the Aryans brought with them a remarkably advanced oral - poetic tradition which would revolutionize worship in India. This oral tradition became known as the *Vedas* or "knowledge" (Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, 25). The *Vedas* are considered part of the *sruti* tradition which associates

them with "revelation" or more literally with "hearing" (Bonnefoy 25). The shamanistic *rsis* or "seers" saw or had visions which produced the *Vedas* but handed the texts down to be heard and repeated. Bonnefoy describes the origins of the *Vedas* in this manner:

> Where did this revelation come from? Two types of answers to this question have been offered: for followers of certain Indian doctrines, the Vedic texts are the work of a divinity, and even the work of a personal god. For others -notably for followers of the *Purva-mimamsa* - the Veda is *apauruseya*: it has no personal author; what is more, it is uncreated, eternal, and unalterable, notwithstanding the fact that particular mythic events were the occasions for the *rsis'* discovery of the different parts and different versions of the Vedic text (25).

Whether they were created by a divinity or through divine revelation like the Bible or the Koran, the *Vedas* are the most important religious texts of early India. In fact, Basham notes,"The Vedic hymns are still recited at weddings and funerals, and in the daily devotions of the brahman" (*The Wonder That Was India*, 30). Therefore, because of a living oral tradition which considered these hymns crucial to the cosmic order, the Vedas, as far as we can tell, have remained intact for nearly three thousand years.

The Vedas contain many types of hymns. The creation myths, however, offer us a unique perspective on the Aryan's anthropomorphic thinking. Perhaps one of the most famous of the hymns is the *Purusa-Sukta* or "The Hymn of Man." The *Purusa-Sukta* is a seminal creation myth because so many of the key concepts found in this hymn later develop into fundamental aspects in Hinduism. As a creation myth, it posits the existence of a cosmic giant called Purusa or "the Man." Purusa represents a clearly anthropomorphic conceptualization of the cosmos and attempts to explain the operation and order of the universe in a simple metaphor:

1 The Man has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. He pervaded the earth on all sides and extended beyond it as far as ten fingers.

2 It is the Man who is all this, whatever has been and whatever is to be. He is the ruler of immortality, when he grows beyond everything through food.

3 Such is his greatness, and the Man is yet more than this. All creatures are a quarter of him; three quarters are what is immortal in heaven.

4 With three quarters the Man rose upwards, and one quarter of him still remains here. From this he spread out in all directions, into that which eats and that which does not eat.

5 From him Viraj was born, and from Viraj came the Man. When he was born, he ranged beyond the earth behind and before. (O'Flaherty 30).

The proliferation of heads, eyes, and feet in the first line suggests the common, subsequent Indian method of depicting omniscience. The Hindu god Brahma, for example, is frequently depicted with at least five heads, many arms, and many sets of feet. In addition, the presentation of the cosmic man Purusa is reminiscent of the scenes in the *Mahabharata* where Krishna reveals his cosmic form, which takes the shape of the universe inside a body, to Dhritarashtra and Arjuna. Although the basic metaphor for the cosmos is a body, Purusa's body is invested with wondrous attributes. It "grows beyond everything through food." Also, it has both earthy and heavenly manifestations since "all creatures are a quarter of him," and "three quarters are what is immortal in heaven." So one quarter remains on earth, and three quarters rise into the heavens where he "spreads out in all directions" through both "what eats" and "what does not eat." Thus, the expansion of Purusa represents an unfolding or an emanating of the cosmic body into both the organic and inorganic realms. Similar to the Biblical Genesis where Eve (living) is extracted from Adam (the ground), in this creation myth the female principle Viraj is born from Purusa. O'Flaherty describes Viraj as "the active female principle" who is later replaced in Sankhya philosophy by Prakrti or material nature (31). The origin of Viraj, however, is rendered a little more ambiguous than the creation of Eve because of the paradoxical line: "From him Viraj was born, and from Viraj came the Man." The reciprocal nature of the above quoted line points to the kind of relationship found later between Shiva and Shakti, especially in the representations where Shiva is depicted as a corpse without Shakti's manifestation of creative energy.

After establishing the concept of the body as cosmos, the most important elaboration in the myth is the sacrificial nature of the body throughout the rest of the hymn. Eliot Deutsch in his essay "The Concept of the Body" lists the four most common metaphors for the representation of the body as: the Platonic "prison-house" which is constantly making demands "driving us towards evils and desires;" the "temple" in which the body is conceived as a "holy vessel" which is "enshrining a divine spirit;" a "machine" in which physicality is intrinsically "bound to nature" as "but one kind of physical system among many others;" and the "instrument" which is a development of the machine metaphor and which establishes how human beings

have "true independent wills which enable them to use their bodies as instruments." (Kasulis 6-7). To those four representations of the body might be added the body as sacrifice which is described in this hymn. Daniélou sums up the Vedic notion of sacrifice in this way:

> The universe appeared to the Vedic Aryan as a constant ritual of sacrifice. The strange destiny which compels every living thing to kill, to devour other things so as to exist, struck him with awe and wonder. The transformation of life into life seemed the very nature of the universe. "To live is to devour life." All existence could be brought back to the fundamental dualism of two factors: food (*anna*) and the devourer (*annada*). Every creature is the devourer of another and is the food of some other. Existing means devouring and being devoured. (64)

Thus, in the Parusa hymn, the universe is set in motion with the sacrifice of Purusa's body:

> 6 When the gods spread the sacrifice with the Man as the offering, spring was the clarified butter, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation.
> 7 They anointed the Man, the sacrifice born at the beginning, upon the sacred grass. With him the gods, Sadhayas, and sages sacrificed.
> 8 From that sacrifice in which everything was offered, the melted fat was collected, and he made it into those beasts who live in the air, in the forest, and in villages.
> 9 From the sacrifice in which everything was offered, the verses and chants were born, the meters were born from it, and from it the formulas were born.
> 10 Horses were born from it, and those other animals that have two rows of teeth; cows were born from it, and from it goats and sheep were born. (O'Flaherty 30).

Thus, Purusa is the sacrifice which the gods, Sadhyas or demigods whose name literally means those who are yet to be fulfilled (O'Flaherty 32), and sages offer. The ritual of sacrifice which is so fundamental to this Vedic conceptualization of the universe posits the cosmic body as a universal offering. Unlike Sumerian mythology in which the material of the universe is devised from the murdered and butchered body of the goddess Tiamat by her son Marduk, the sacrifice of Purusa involves a willing sacrifice of the primal cosmic body. Purusa's sacrifice is more like Christ's willing sacrifice of his body for the spiritual benefit of mankind. Purusa offers a total sacrifice because "everything is offered." Because of the decisiveness and grandeur of the offering, the ambiguous "he" of the hymn, either Purusa himself or "a creator god"

(O'Flaherty 32), animals are created; then, the all important verses, chants, poetic formulas, and poetic meters. The animals mentioned in the last line such as cows, which were the Aryans unit of barter (Basham *The Wonder That Was India* 37), goats, sheep and horses are the most important to the Aryans who were basically herding tribes. (Basham, *The Wonder That Was India, 35*). In addition, the horse was an animal the Aryans had introduced into the sub-continent. (Basham, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, 3). The horse is also important because a king or "raja" was legitimized by the ritual horse sacrifice. Here is a brief description of this momentous sacrifice:

> Most important of the great royal ceremonies was the *asvamedha*, the horse sacrifice. It was the ambition of every king of importance to perform at least one *asvamedha* in the course of his reign, for thus he would not only insure a heaven for himself and prosperity for his land and people but also establish his own importance and prove his power and influence over all other kings in the vicinity of his kingdom.
>
> The *asvamedha* involved a programme of activities lasting for well over a year. In the early spring a specially chosen stallion was consecrated and released to wander at will. With him traveled one hundred other horses and a band of four hundred chosen young warriors, whose duty it was to follow the horse wherever he led them. If he wandered beyond the bounds of the realm of the king who released him, the local rulers were summoned to render homage and tribute. If they refused to do so, the warriors following the horse gave battle. The failure of an *asvamedha* is not unknown in tradition, but it rarely occurred, for no king in his right senses would carry out such an extensive ceremony without fair certainty that it would succeed. At the end of the year the horse was returned to the capital of the king and sacrificed by strangulation or suffocation, together with a large number of other animals. (Bashan, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, 33).

The horse sacrifice was a spectacle of immense importance to the kings because of its far reaching implications for the kingdom. As a ritual, it also had some rather bizarre features which accompanied it:

> A feature of the *asvamedha* which has aroused considerable comment is the sexual character of one of the concluding ceremonies. The chief queen lay down beside the body of the sacrificed horse and simulated copulation with him, to the accompaniment of obscene remarks by the priests and nobles standing by. This shows that the *asvamedha* had some of its roots in very ancient ceremonies, and its

purpose was to ensure the productivity of the land, represented by the queen. (Bashan, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, 33-34).

Therefore, although the primary significance of the horse sacrifice was political, it also contained a rather strange ritualistic function in which the queen acted to secure the future fertility of the kingdom by simulated intercourse with the dead horse.

In the final section of the hymn, the human creation is described. This section is important because of the sacrificial division of Parusa's body into the various classes of humanity:

11 When they divided the Man, into how many parts did they apportion him? What do they call his mouth, his two arms and thighs and feet?
12 His mouth became the Brahmin; his arms were made into the Warrior, his thighs the People, and from his feet the Servants were born.
13 The moon was born from his mind; from his eye the sun was born. Indra and Agni came from his mouth, and from his vital breath the Wind was born.
14 From his navel the middle realm of space arose; from his head the sky evolved. From his two feet came the earth, and the quarters of the sky from his ear. Thus they set the worlds in order.
15 There were seven enclosing-sticks for him, and thrice seven fuel-sticks, when the gods, spreading the sacrifice, bound the Man as the sacrificial beast.
16 With the sacrifice the gods sacrificed to the sacrifice. These were the first ritual laws. These very powers reached the dome of the sky where dwell the Sadhayas, the ancient gods. (O'Flaherty 31).

The unique representation in this section of the myth is the origin of the Indian caste system in a hierarchical fashion from the sacrificial body of Purusa. The Brahmans, therefore, originate from the highest section of Purusa, his mouth. Moreover, the Brahmans have the most authority and speak for the gods as the keepers of the earthly sacrifices. Next in status would be the Kshatriya who were made from the arms of Purusa. Their role is to defend the kingdom against invaders. The third caste is the Vaisya who are born from the thighs of Purusa. They represent the merchant class. Finally, the lowest caste is the Sudras or servants who are born from Parusa's feet. This creation myth also serves to legitimize the caste system which existed in India officially until 1945. In addition to the cast system, the above quoted passage of this hymn also establishes the creation of the other important gods of the Vedic pantheon

who are also males anthropomorphically depicted including Indra and Agni. Daniélou characterizes Indra in the following way:

> In the *Vedas*, Indra appears as the deity of the sphere of space, the dispenser of rain who dwells in the clouds. Feared as the ruler of the storm, the thrower of the thunderbolt, he is also the cause of fertility...As the king of the gods, Indra is a prominent deity...He stands for action and service but also for the need of force which leads to power, to victory, and booty. He leads the warriors and protects them with his thunderbolt and his bow, the rainbow. (106-107).

Indra is the most popular of the gods because he represents kingship and the ethos of the warrior. Almost equally as important is Agni and the god with whom he is frequently associated, Soma. Here is how Daniélou contrasts Agni, whose name means fire, and Soma, whose name means an hallucinogenic liquor:

> Agni is all that burns, or devours, or digests: sun, heat, stomach, lust, and passion. Soma is all offering, all fuel, the cold, the moon, the food, the victim, the sperm, the wine. Agni is the warm outward breath of the Indestructible Person (*aksara purusa*) [the permanent Law of things]; Soma is his cool inward breath. Fire is the life, Soma the activity; Fire is the enjoyer and Soma all that is enjoyed. Fire is red, Soma is the color of night. (63-64).

Agni is the basis for the simple form of barter the Aryans conducted with their gods. All the oblations were cast into the flames which digested them for the gods. Therefore, Agni represents the crucial mediator between humans and gods. Soma, on the other hand, is the drink or god who brings courage before battle, solace from exhaustion, and ecstasy for any special occasion.

Indian Vedic literature is rich with creation myths. One of the more specific and tangible of the creation myths which is described in human terms is the Golden Embryo. It begins:

> 1 In the beginning the Golden Embryo arose. Once he was born, he was the one lord of creation. He held in place the earth and this sky. Who is the god we should worship with the oblation?
> 2 He who gives life, who gives strength, whose command all the gods, his own, obey; his shadow is immortality - and death. Who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?
> 3 He who by his greatness became the one king of the world that breathes and blinks, who rules over his two-footed and four-footed creatures-who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation? (O'Flaherty 27).

The god of this creation is a "he" who was born from an embryo like a human and "breathes and blinks" as well. O'Flaherty further highlights the anthropomorphic qualities of this creation myth in the following passage:

> The creator in this hymn is called Hiranyagarbha, a truly pregnant term. It is a compound noun, whose first element means "gold" and whose second element means "womb, seed, embryo, or child" in the *Rig Veda* and later comes to mean 'egg'; this latter meaning becomes prominent in the cosmogonic myth of the golden egg that separates, the two shells becoming sky and earth, while the yolk is the sun. In the present hymn, the compound functions straightforwardly: the god *is* the golden embryo or seed. Later, it is glossed as a possessive compound: he is the god who (more anthropomorphically) *possesses* the golden seed or egg...Furthermore, the egg is both a female image (that which is fertilized by seed and which contains the embryo that is like the yolk) and a male image (the testicles containing seed). (O'Flaherty 26-27).

Other anthropomorphic associations in the hymn include that the "he" "looked", "fathered the earth and created the sky" and "embraces all the creatures" (O'Flaherty 28). Another creation myth which is considerably more ambiguous is entitled Creation Hymn (*Nasadiya*):

> 1 There was neither non-existence nor existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, bottomlessly deep?
> 2 There was neither death nor immortality then. There was no distinguishing sign of night nor of day. That one breathed, windless, by its own impulse. Other than that there was nothing beyond.
> 3 Darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning; with no distinguishing sign, all this was water. The life force that was covered with emptiness, that one arose through the power of heat.
> 4 Desire came upon that one in the beginning; that was the first seed of mind. Poets seeking in their heart with wisdom found the bond of existence in non-existence.
> 5 Their cord was extended across. Was there below? Was there above? There were seed-placers; there were powers. There was impulse beneath; there was giving-forth above.
> 6 Who really knows? Who will hear proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation? The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe. Who then knows whence it has arisen?
> 7 Whence this creation has arisen - perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not - the one who looks on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows - or perhaps he does not know. (O'Flaherty 25-26).

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This hymn, quoted in its entirety, poses more questions concerning creation than it answers! Its astonishing conclusion suggests that perhaps even god does not understand the process whereby the universe was created. One key word in the hymn which appears in the fourth line is "desire" or *kama*. It seems to be desire which extends a "cord" between what is "above" and what is "below" uniting them in the very act of creation. This act of creation is depicted as: "There was impulse beneath; there was giving-forth above." The creation is achieved, therefore, by the primal urge of desire which culminates when the earth as mother "impulse beneath" joins sexually with father sky "giving-forth above" thereby inaugurating the universe as we know it. Thus, the union of these two opposites through a sexual metaphor creates the universe. How different this creation through union is from both its Sumerian counterpart where the God Mardak murders his mother Tiamat and fashions the universe out of her dead body or its Hebrew counterpart in which Yahweh Elohim creates the universe alone.

The above quoted Vedic creation myth utilizes "desire" or *kama* as the primal force involved in nature which brings all things to fruition. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Vedas themselves rely heavily on the use of metaphors involving desire and sexual descriptions. Here is how Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty interprets the tendency of the Vedas to employ amorous imagery:

> The *Rig Veda* is a sacred book, but it is a very worldly sacred book. Nowhere can we find the tiniest suspicion of a wish to renounce the material world in favour of some spiritual quest; religion is the handmaiden of worldly life. The gods are invoked to give the worshipper the things he wants - health, wealth, long life, and progeny. This is not to say that there is anything superficial about Vedic religious concerns, but merely that these meditations stem from a life-affirming, joyous celebration of human existence (229).

There are many examples in the Vedas of desirable bodies used as analogies for other things. In the following example, dawn is described as a "beautiful goddess:"

> Like a girl who has become aware of the radiance of her body, she seems to rise from her bath for us to see. Pressing away hostilities and darkness, Dawn the daughter of heaven, has come with her light.
>
> The daughter of heaven, facing men, slips down her garments, like a beautiful young woman [before her husband]. Opening up all desirable things for him who serves her, the youthful maiden once again, as before, has created her light. (Embree 15).

Some other examples would include: a draught animal, "The draught animal is pressed tight between two shafts like a man in bed with two women." (O'Flaherty 67); a bow, "She (the bow) comes all the way up to your ear like a woman who wishes to say something, embracing her dear friend; humming like a woman, the bowstring stretched tight on the bow carries you safely across in the battle."(O'Flaherty 236); and sacred speech, "It (sacred speech) reveals itself to someone as a loving wife, beautifully dressed, reveals her body to her husband" (O'Flaherty 61). Desire also plays a fundamental role in the more sexual passages in the Vedas such as: "Pusan, rouse her to be most eager to please, the woman in whom men sow their seed, so that she will spread her thighs in her desire for us, and we, in our desire, will plant our penis in her." (O'Flaherty 270); "The penis, men, take the penis and move it and stick it in to win the prize." (O'Flaherty 67); " 'Indeed, you pierced me with your rod three times a day, and filled me even when I had no desire.' " (O'Flaherty 253); and "Soma first possessed her, and the Gandharva possessed her second. Agni was your third husband, and the fourth was the son of a man." (O'Flaherty 271).

Some of the Vedas are written in dialogue form with the female initiating sexual relations. An example of this type of hymn is *Yama and Yami* in which Yama, the first mortal man and later king of the underworld refuses his twin sister Yami's advances:

1 [Yami:] 'Would that I might draw my friend into intimate friendship, now that he has gone far across the ocean. A man of foresight should receive a grandson from the father, thinking of what lies ahead on earth.'

2 [Yama:] 'Your friend does not desire this friendship, in which a woman of his kind would behave like a stranger. The heroes, the sons of the great spirit, supporters of the sky, see far and wide.'

3 [Yami:] 'The immortals desire this, that offspring should be left by the one mortal. Let your mind unite with my mind; as a husband, enter the body of your wife.'

4 [Yama:] 'Shall we do now what we have not done before? Shall we who spoke truth out loud now whisper falsehood? The divine youth in the waters and the woman of the waters - such is our source, our highest birth.'

5 [Yami:] 'The god Tvastr, the creator and impeller, shaper of all forms, made us man and wife even when we were still in the womb. No one disobeys his commands; earth and sky are our witnesses for this.'

6 [Yama:] 'Who was the witness of that first day? Who has seen it? Who can proclaim it here? The law of Mitra and Varuna is high. Yet what will you say to men, wanton woman, to seduce them?'

7 [Yami:] 'Desire for Yama has come upon me, Yami, the desire to lie with him upon the same bed. Let me open my body to him as a wife to her husband. Let us roll about together like the two wheels of a chariot.'

8 [Yama:] 'These spies of the gods, who wander about here below, do not stand still, nor do they blink their eyes. Wanton woman, go away fast with another man, not with me. Roll about with him like the two wheels of a chariot.'

9 [Yami:] 'She should do what he wished in the nights and in the days; she would deceive the eye of the sun for the instant of the blink of an eye. We twins are related in the same way as sky and earth. Let Yami behave toward Yama as if she were not his sister.'

10 [Yama:] 'Later ages will come, indeed, when blood relatives will act as if they were not related. Make a pillow of your arm for some bull of a man. Seek another husband, lovely lady, not me.'

11 [Yami:] 'What good is a brother, when there is no protector? What good is a sister, when destruction breaks out? Overcome with desire, I whisper this again and again: mingle your body with my body.'

12 [Yama:] 'Never will I mingle my body with your body. They call a man who unites with his sister a sinner. Arrange your lustful pleasures with some other man, not with me, lovely lady. Your brother does not want this.'

13 [Yami:] 'Dammit, Yama, how feeble you are. I have not been able to find any mind or heart in you. Some other woman will surely embrace you like a girth embracing a harnessed stallion or a creeper embracing a tree.'

14 [Yama:] 'You too, Yami, will surely embrace another man, and he will embrace you, as a creeper embraces a tree. Seek his mind, and let him seek yours. Join with him in proper harmony.' (O'Flaherty 247-249).

The power of *kama* is certainly presented as a necessary aspect of the Vedic gods. Yami's passionate desire for Yama is clearly expressed in such lines as: "Would that I might draw my friend into intimate friendship..."; '"Let your mind unite with my mind; as a husband, enter the body of your wife."; Let me open my body to him as a wife to her husband."; "Let us roll about together like two wheels of a chariot."; and "...mingle your body with my body." Even after Yama's adamant rejections of his sister Yami, each of the twins reassures the other that a lover will appear who "will embrace you like a girth embracing a harnessed stallion or a creeper embracing a tree." These final two similes establish that *kama* will satisfy both Yami and Yama in a more "proper harmony" than the incest proposed and rejected in this hymn.

A similar scenario is presented in *Agastya and Lopamudra*. In this hymn,

Lopamudra tries to induce her husband Agastya, who has taken a vow of chastity, to have sex with her:

1 [Lopamudra:] 'For many autumns past I have toiled, night and day, and each dawn has brought old age closer, age that distorts the glory of bodies. Virile men should go to their wives.

2 'For even the men of the past, who acted according to the Law and talked about the Law with the gods, broke off when they did not find the end. Women should unite with virile men.

3 [Agastya:] 'Not in vain is all this toil, which the gods encourage. We two must always strive against each other, and by this we will win the race that is won by a hundred means, where we merge together as a couple.'

4 [Lopamudra:] 'Desire has come upon me for the bull who roars and is held back, desire engulfing me from this side, that side, all sides.'
[The Poet:] Lopamudra draws out the virile bull: the foolish woman sucks dry the panting wise man.

5 [Agastya:] 'By this Soma which I have drunk, in my innermost heart I say: Let him forgive us if we have sinned, for a mortal is full of many desires.'

6 Agastya, digging with spades, wishing for children, progeny, and strength, nourished both ways, for he was a powerful sage. He found fulfillment of his real hopes among gods. (O'Flaherty 250-251).

Unlike Yami and Yama whose relationship would have been incestuous, what Lopamudra desires is both honorable and lawful: "Virile men shroud go to their wives."; "Women should unite with virile men."; "Desire has come upon me for the bull who roars and is held back..." However, Agastya's ascetic vow is forgotten when he couples with her: "Lopamudra draws out the virile bull; the foolish woman sucks dry the panting man." After "digging with spades," a clear metaphor for sex, Agastya expects "progeny" which will represent the "fulfillment of his real hopes among gods" by making him immortal through his children. Thus, he is "nourished both ways." He is sexually fulfilled and spiritually fulfilled because he will have a necessary heir for the rites of cremation. In any case, the hymn shows that one of the important themes in the *Vedas* concerns the understanding that "a mortal is full of desires."

Another hymn in which desire is brought to the foreground is *Indra and the Monkey*. This bizarre poem, which Renou has dubbed "the strangest poem in the *Rig Veda*," (O'Flaherty 257) is too long to quote in its entirety. Here is how O'Flaherty introduces it:

> This hymn...deals with conflict and resolution on at least four levels, alluded to in a conversation between four people; Indra and his wife, and Vrsakapi (whose name means 'the monkey bursting with seed' and

> his wife. On the household level, there are crude arguments in which Indrani accuses the monkey, a favorite of Indra, of having taken sexual liberties with her; Indra tries to calm her with flattery, and Vrsakapi's wife alternately flatters her, engages her in sexual banter about their husbands' powers, and insists either that Vrsakapi never touched Indrani or that now, at least, he has ceased to do so; finally, Indrani relents and asks the monkey couple to resume the *ménage à quatre* .This aspect of the myth places it among other bawdy and worldly hymns, usually set in the form of conversations (257-258).

The poem begins with Indrani's protestations about Vrsakapi to which Indra answers:

> 3 [Indra:] 'What has this tawny animal, this Vrsakapi, done to you that you are so jealous of him - and begrudge him the nourishing wealth of the enemy? Indra supreme above all!'
> 4 [Indrani:] 'That beloved Vrsakapi whom you protect, Indra - let the dog who pants after the wild sow bite him in the ear! Indra supreme above all!'
> 5 'The ape has defiled the precious, well-made, anointed things that are mine. I will cut off his "head", and I will not be good to that evil-doer. Indra supreme above all!'
> 6 'No woman has finer loins than I, or is better at making love. No woman thrusts against a man better than I, or raises and spreads her thighs more. Indra supreme above all!'
> 7 [Vrsakapi;] 'O little mother, so easily won, as it will surely be, my loins, my thigh, my "head" seem to thrill and stiffen, little mother. Indra supreme above all!' (O'Flaherty 259-260).

And the poem continues in this bluntly sexual fashion until Indrani claims that Vrsakapi is not sexually "powerful" while Vrsakapi's wife claims the same thing about Indra:

> 16 [Indrani:] 'That one is not powerful, whose penis hangs between his thighs; that one is powerful, for whom the hairy organ opens as it swells and sets to work. Indra supreme above all!'
> 17 [Vrsakapi's wife] 'That one is not powerful, for whom the hairy organ opens as it swells and sets to work; that one is powerful whose penis hangs between his thighs. Indra supreme above all!' (O'Flaherty 260).

Indra and the Monkey is perhaps the best example of how forthrightly the Vedic hymns depict *kama*. The playful banter concerning desire shows that even Indra, the most powerful and respected of the Vedic gods, is concerned with sexual matters in what appears to be a very human way.

Unlike the mythological content of the other *Vedas*, the the *Atharva-veda* is comprised of a genre closer to charms or spells. These hymns resemble the few

Anglo-Saxon charms which are extant and the charms and spells spoken by Vainamoinen in the *Kalevala*. The *Athava-veda's* charms deal with everything from keeping away plague to obtaining a son. The following brief "Love-Charm Spoken by a Bridal Couple" is a good example of the genre: "The eyes of us two shine like honey, our foreheads gleam like ointment. Place me within thy heart: may one mind be in common to us both." (Bloomfield 96). This simple charm represents the longing for union of bodies and minds of the bridal couple. Another example of a simple charm which was spoken in the service of love is the "Charm Pronounced by the Bride over the Bridegroom:" "I envelop thee in my garment that was produced by Manu (the first man), that thou shalt be mine alone, shalt not even discourse of other women!" (Bloomfield 96). The ritual "enveloping" of the bridegroom by the bride's garment is a symbolic union which prefigures consummation after the marriage. The charm also highlights the bride's desire for complete exclusivity in the marriage; she does not want the groom even to speak to another woman. Similarly, some of the hymns depict jealous wives especially the following one entitled "Against Rival Wives" which is "dedicated to Indrani, wife of the notoriously womanizing Indra." (O'Flaherty 289):

1 I dig up this plant, the most powerful thing that grows, with which one drives out the rival wife and wins the husband entirely for oneself.
2 Broad-leaved plant sent by the gods to bring happiness and the power to triumph, blow my rival wife away and make my husband mine alone.
3 O highest one, I am the highest one, higher than all the highest women, and my rival wife is lower than the lowest women.
4 I will not even take her name into my mouth; he takes on pleasure in this person. Far, far into the distance we make the rival wife go.
5 I have emerged triumphant, and you also have triumphed. The two of us, full of the power to triumph, will triumph over my rival wife.
6 I have placed the plant of triumph on you, and grasped you with my power to triumph. Let your heart run after me like a cow after a calf, like a water running in its own bed. (O'Flaherty 289-290).

Since the Aryan social system included polygamy, the anxiety about rival wives was a very real one for women. In this delightful hymn, the wife wishes for the magic of the plant to "blow my rival wife away." The hope "to make my husband mine alone" is expressed in the last line of the hymn in two similes: "Let your heart run after me like a cow after a calf, like a water running in its own bed." A companion hymn to the one quote above is the one entitled "The Triumphant Wife:"

1 There the sun has risen, and here my good fortune has risen. Being a

clever woman, and able to triumph, I have triumphed over my husband.

2 I am the banner; I am the head. I am the formidable one who has the deciding word. My husband will obey my will alone, as I emerge triumphant.

3 My sons kill their enemies and my daughter is an empress, and I am completely victorious. My voice is supreme in my husband's ears.

4 The oblation that Indra made and so became glorious and supreme, this is what I have made for you, O gods. I have become truly without rival wives.

5 Without rival wives, killer of rival wives, victorious and preeminent, I have grabbed for myself the attraction of the other women as if it were the wealth of flighty women.

6 I have conquered and become preeminent over these riṽal wives, so that I may rule as empress over this hero and over the people. (O'Flaherty 290-291).

The above quoted hymn uses the analogy of the battlefield to describe the ascendancy of one wife over her rivals in the harem. The "formidable one" in the hymn is depicted as "the killer of wives" which employs the language of war. In the war within the harem, preeminence means power both for the wife and for her son who will become the heir to the throne.

All of the above quoted hymns show the central importance of of love, earthly delights, and power represented by the physical interplay of people. On the cosmic level, the *Vedas* present the body as a universal sacrifice which creates the context for human life. However, on the more mundane level, the body is depicted as a machine which is fueled by the sacrifice of food. The universe is conceived as dualistic containing either eater or eaten.

The Brahmanas

After the composition of the four poetic Vedas, the first prose narrative tradition in the Indo-European language developed. (de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition,* 19). The first texts to emerge from this tradition are the *Brahmanas.* The *Brahmanas* derive their name from the Sanskrit term *brahmana* which means "relating to Brahman or simply "brahmanic." (de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition,* 19). They depict the concerns of the Brahman priests. Thus, the main concern of these narratives, as de Bary points out, was with "the nature and use of the holy word, utterance, prayer, invocation, or divine power in the sacrifice, that is, *brahman."* (19). These treatises contain long explanations of Vedic rituals and performances and are chiefly

concerned with the notion of sacrifice: "There are three categories of sacrifice - the cooked-food sacrifice to be offered on the domestic fire, the oblation sacrifice, and the *soma* sacrifice, the last two to be offered on the sacred *srauta* (Vedic) fires." (de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 19-20). Each of the *Brahmanas* was connected with one of the four *Vedas* and acted as a sort of commentary about an aspect of the ritual described. Therefore, in the *Brahmanas*, the ritual of the sacrifice always occurs in the foreground, while the description or depiction of the body is merely allotted a very minor role in the background where the sacrifice is being conducted. The *Brahmanas* essentially delineate the rules for the sacrifice and the explanation for these rules.

The Upanishads

Toward the end of the time when the *Brahmanas* were settled, a new class of prose text developed. These were called *Arangakas* or "forest books" probably because they were originally recited as part of an oral tradition by hermits living in the forest (de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 24). In the *Upanishads*, the focus of the text shifts away from the sacrifice and emphasizes the meaning and explanation of the body, self, and the relationship with the divine. Like the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* are considered *sruti* or revealed literature (Radhakrishnan and Moore 34). The title *Upanishad* is etymologically derived in the following way: *upi* means near, *ni* means down, and *sad* means to sit (Radhakrishnan and Moore 37). Hence, the word comes to mean teachings heard from a sage while sitting in the forest. There are over two hundred *Upanishads* which were composed by many different sages in the pre-Buddhist period some time between the eighth or seventh century B.C.E. (Radhakrishnan and Moore 37). In terms of form, the Upanishads contain narratives, dialogues, verses, and the teachings of ancient sages (Brereton 115). Similar to the *Brahmanas*, each *Upanishad* is attached to one of the four books of the Vedas (de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 24). Therefore, the *Vedas*, *Brahmanas*, and *Upanishads* are all considered as Vedic. The *Upanishads* are the end or Vedanta; thus, later philosophical schools of classical Hinduism which base themselves on the tenets or the authority of the *Upanishads* are called *Vedanta* (de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 24). Unlike the *Brahmanas*, in the *Upanishads* the significance of the enacting of Vedic rituals and performances are downplayed whereas the knowledge concerning the significance of these become of primal importance (de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 24). In the *Upanishads* hymns to the gods are

replaced by more speculative analyses of reality concentrating on a quest for the atemporal qualities extant in transitory existence.

Like the Vedas, a proliferation of creation myths exists in the *Upanishads*. Perhaps one of the more remarkable ones is the following from the *Brihad-Aranyana Upanishad*:

> 1. In the beginning this world was Soul (*Atman*) alone in the form of a Person. Looking around, he saw nothing else than himself...
> 2. He was afraid. Therefore one who is alone is afraid. This one then thought to himself: 'Since there is nothing else than myself, of what am I afraid?' thereupon, verily, his fear departed, for of what should he have been afraid? Assuredly it is from a second that fear arises.
> 3. Verily, he had no delight. Therefore one alone has no delight. He desired a second. He was, indeed, as large as a woman and a man closely embraced. He caused that self to fall into two pieces. Therefrom arose a husband and a wife. Therefore this[is true]: 'oneself is like a half-fragment,' as Yajnavalkya used to say. Therefore this space is filled by a wife. He copulated with her. Therefrom human beings were produced.
> 4. And she then bethought herself: 'How now does he copulate with me after he has produced me just from himself? Come let me hide myself.' She became a cow. He became a bull. With her he did indeed copulate. Then cattle were born. She became a mare, he a stallion. She became a female ass, he a male ass; with her he copulated, of a truth. Thence were born solid-hoofed animals. She became a she-goat, he a he-goat; she a ewe, he a ram. With her he did verily copulate. Therefrom were born goats and sheep. Thus, indeed, he created all, whatever pairs there are, even down to the ants. (Hume 81).

The most fundamental difference between the above quoted passage and the *Vedas* is the essential spiritual nature of the creation. In the *Vedas*, the original man Purusa is conceived as a body fit for sacrifice, and out of that sacrifice the bodies of all humans will be created. In the above quoted passage, it is not so much a body which is created, but rather a soul or Atman. The reason for this shift in emphasis is that one of the major themes throughout the *Upanishads* is the reciprocal relationship between the Atman or soul and Brahman or god. Although the creation is conceived as grounded in the spirituality which the Atman signifies, the majority of the passage is describing a very physical creation of humanity and animals. The fact that the primal "he" is originally described as being "as large as a woman and a man closely embraced," is reminiscent of a slightly more comical creation myth related by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium* where the original creation was hermaphroditic; it

was punished by the gods by being separated into the two sexes; and the result was that love's desire compels each half to seek its other missing half in order to be completed again in sexual union. In any case, animals are created by the primal female attempting to escape "copulating" with the male by transforming from body form to body form down the phylogenetic continuum "to the ants."

A second creation myth is depicted in the *Aitareya Upanishad*. In this myth, much more attention is focused on the crafting of the first human's body:

> 1. In the beginning, Atman (Self, Soul), verily, one only, was here - no other winking thing whatever. He bethought himself; 'Let me now create worlds."
> 2. He created these worlds: water, light-rays, death, the waters. Yon is the water, above the heaven; the heaven is its support. The light-rays are the atmosphere; death, the earth; what is underneath, the waters.
> 3. He bethought himself: 'Here now are worlds. Let me now create world-guardians.' Right from the waters he drew forth and shaped a person.
> 4. Upon him he brooded. When he had been brooded upon, his mouth was separated out, egg-like; from the mouth, speech; from speech, Agni (Fire). Nostrils were separated out; from the nostrils, breath; from the breath, Vayu (wind). Eyes were separated out; from the eyes, sight; from sight Aditya (the Sun). Ears were separated out; from ears, hearing; from hearing, the quarters of heaven. Skin was separated out; from skin, hairs; from hairs, plants and trees. A heart was separated out; from the heart, mind; from mind, the moon. A navel was separated out; from the navel, the out-breath; from the out-breath, death. A virile member was separated out; from the virile member, semen; from the semen, water. (Hume 294-295).

The above quoted creation myth is similar in many ways to the Bible's "Genesis." It posits the creation by a male god; it creates the universe before humanity, and it creates a male before a female. On the other hand, what is different in the above quoted version is that the human is created out of water instead of earth; what is fashioned on the body of the microcosm of the primal male appears also on the macrocosm of the earth; the mind is created out of the heart; and this version finds it important to mention the primal man's "membrum virilis" which is not deemed appropriate in the Bible.

A radically different type of creation myth is found in the *Prasna Upanishad*. In this version, the creation is brought about through austerities instead of sacrifice:

> The Lord of Creation (Prajapati), verily, was desirous of creatures

(offspring, *praja*). He performed austerity. Having performed austerity, he produces a pair, matter (*rayi*, fem.) and life (*prana*, masc.), thinking "These two will make creatures for me in manifold ways." (Hume 378).

The concept of austerities performed to the body as a positive model for the society is a new idea introduced in the *Upanishads*. It does not appear anywhere in the *Vedas*. Yoga as a form of discipline which harmonizes both mind and body develops as a major theme throughout the *Upanishads*. The following passage from the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is a good example of this theme:

8. Holding his body with the three [upper parts] erect,
And causing the senses with the mind to enter into the heart,
A wise man with the Brahma-boat should cross over
All the fear-bringing streams.
9. Having repressed his breathings here in the body, and having his movements checked,
One should breathe through his nostrils with diminished breath.
Like that chariot yoked with vicious horses,
His mind the wise man should restrain undistractedly.
10. In a clean level spot, free from pebbles, fire, and gravel,
By the sound of water and other propinquities
Favorable to thought, not offensive to the eye,
In a hidden retreat protected from the wind, one should practice Yoga. (Hume 398).

The above quoted passage gives concrete advice about the practice of yoga. It requires a straight posture, "causing the senses with the mind to enter the heart" or concentrating energy inward, slowing of breathing, the mind must be controlled "like that chariot yoked with vicious horses." The last simile is particularly apt because yoga means to yoke. Later, in the *Bhagava-Gita*, some of the same advice for the practice of yoga is taught by Krishna to Arjuna (Miller 64). The Svetasvatara *Upanishad* continues to make the following points:

11. Fog, smoke,sun, fire, wind,
Fire-flies, lightning, a crystal, a moon -
These are the preliminary appearances,
Which produce the manifestation of Brahma in Yoga.
12. When the fivefold quality of Yoga has been produced,
Arising from earth, water, fire, air, and space,
No sickness, no old age, no death has he
Who has obtained a body made out of the fire of Yoga. (Hume 398).

Thus, yoga produces the manifestation of Brahma through inward concentration. And this manifestation of Brahma, as we shall see later, produces in turn: "No sickness, no old age, and no death." Yoga as a spiritual technology allows the worshiper a new dimension to worship itself. The bridge to the eternal is no longer viewed as the old barter system of the sacrifice, but rather, it is now viewed as the inner quest for knowledge. The *Katha Upanishad* describes yoga as a way of allowing the mind to concentrate past the distortion of the outward senses:

1. The Self-existent pierced the openings [of the senses] outward;
   Therefore one looks outward, not within himself.
   A certain wise man, while seeking immortality,
   Introspectively beheld the Soul (Atman) face to face.
2. The childish go after outward pleasures;
   They walk into the net of widespread death.
   But the wise, knowing immortality,
   Seek not the stable among things which are unstable here. (Hume 353).

Some important new antinomies are constructed in passages such as this: the downplaying of the outer world of the senses along with the concurrent valuing of the importance of introspection; the degrading of sensual pleasures as opposed to the valuing of wisdom which includes knowledge of immortality. A possible explanation for the above mentioned transformation of values is offered by de Bary when he posits the influence of "a great wave of pessimism" through India at this time:

> Several reasons have been suggested to account for this great wave of pessimism, occurring as it did in an expanding society, and in a culture which was rapidly developing both intellectually and materially. It has been suggested that the change in outlook was due to the break-up of old tribes and their replacement by kingdoms wherein ethnic ties and the sense of security which they gave were lost or weakened, thus leading to a deep-seated psychological unease affecting all sections of the people. Another suggested cause of the change in outlook is the revolt of the most intelligent people of the times against the sterile sacrificial cults of the brahmans. (*The Buddhist Tradition*, 5-6)

Whether it was due to the formation of the new kingdoms and the break-up of all tribal clans or because of the unpopularity of the ritualistic sacrifices, the transformation of values which occurs in India at this time is characterized by a turning away from pleasures of the material world and a concentrating on the wisdom gleaned by certain inner explorations provided by the study of yoga.

Yoga is a discipline to both the body and the mind. As a discipline of the mind, yoga creates a state of quietude of the senses in which meditation may be achieved. Meditation, on the other hand, is the essential concentration of the mind. The *Chandogya Upanishad* relates the reason why the mind is in need of discipline:

> As a bird fastened with a string, after flying in this direction and in that without finding an abode elsewhere, rests down just upon it fastening - even so, my dear, the mind, after flying in this direction and that without finding an abode elsewhere, rests down just upon breath; for the mind, my dear, has breath as its fastening. (Hume 245).

The simile contained in this passage compares the frenetic flapping here and there of a bird trapped on a string to the essential condition of the mind. The string which held the bird of the mind is breathing. Hence, all yoga is concerned with the contemplation and slowing down of breathing. Another passage from the *Katha Upanishad* describes how control of the body leads to control of the mind:

> 3. Know thou the soul (*atman*, self) as riding in a chariot,
> The body is the chariot.
> Know thou the intellect as the chariot-driver
> And the mind as the reins,
> 4. The senses, they say, are the horses;
> The objects of sense, what they range over.
> The self combined with senses and mind
> Wise men call 'the enjoyer.'
> 5. He who has not understanding
> Whose mind is not constantly held firm -
> His senses are uncontrolled,
> Like the vicious horses of a chariot-driver.
> 7. He, however, who has understanding,
> Whose mind is constantly held firm -
> His senses are under control,
> Like the good horses of a chariot-driver. (Hume 351-352).

In this set of similes, the consciousness is compared with riding a chariot. With the chariot as body and horses as the senses, it is the all important role of the reins or mind to control the horses of the senses. Through this control disciplined mind or good horses will be developed rather than the vicious horses conditioned by the senses. In the *Maitri Upanishad*, the discipline of the mind is described by the simile of the bow:

> The body is a bow. The arrow is *Om*. The mind is its point. Darkness is the mark. Having pierced through the darkness, one goes to what is not enveloped in darkness. Then, having pierced through what is thus

> enveloped, one sees Him who sparkles like a wheel of fire, of the color of the sun, mightiful, the Brahma that is beyond darkness, that shines in yonder sun, also in the moon, in fire, in lightning. Now, assuredly, when one has seen Him one goes to immortality. (Hume 438).

Thus, the body projects the mind through darkness in search of the target. The target is Brahma. After coming "face to face" with Brahma in meditation, one is on the path of reaching immortality. But what is the nature of Brahma? In order to explain Brahma, we must begin by investigating the concept of Atman or soul. Only after clearly comprehending the nature of Atman can the fundamental equation of the *Upanishads*, Atman equals Brahma, be understood.

Atman can mean either self or soul. The *Chandogya Upanishad* makes this important distinction when Prajapati, the Lord of the Creatures, instructs Indra from among the gods and Virocana from among the devils about the authentic meaning of the self. Prajapati begins by describing the self or Atman in an exalted fashion:

> 'The Self (Atman), which is free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the real - He should be searched out, Him one should desire to understand. He obtains all worlds and all desires who has found out and who understands that Self.' - Thus spake Prajapati. (Hume 268).

This majestic sounding Atman is the goal of the quest. However, Prajapati immediately confounds Indra and Virocana by describing the mere body as the real self: "That Person who is seen in the eye - He is the Self (Atman) of whom I spoke. That is the immortal, the fearless. That is Brahma." (Hume 268). Both are content with this teaching and depart. Afterward Prajapati comments: "They go without having comprehended, without having found the Self (Atman). Whosoever shall have such a doctrine be they gods or devils, shall perish." (Hume 269). Clearly, Prajapati has withheld the full teaching from these two students. Clearly there is a deeper meaning to the Atman than the mere body. Indra, however, sees the danger of considering the body as Atman (self or soul) because it perishes while Virocana happily spreads this doctrine among the devils. After spending a hundred and one more years living with Prajapati as his guru and being tested by him, Indra receives the entire teaching:

1. 'O Maghavan (Munificent One), verily, this body is mortal. It has been appropriated by Death. [But] it is the standing ground of that deathless, bodiless Self (Atman). Verily, he who is incorporate has been appropriated by pleasure and pain. Verily, there is no freedom from

pleasure and pain for one while he is incorporate. Verily, while one is bodiless, pleasure and pain do not touch him.

2. The wind is bodiless. Clouds, lightning, thunder - these are bodiless. Now as these, when they arise from yonder space and reach the highest light, appear each with its own form, even so that serene one, when he rises up from this body and reaches the highest light, appears with his own form. Such a one is the supreme person. There such a one goes around laughing, sporting, having enjoyment with women or chariots or friends, not remembering the appendage of this body. As a draft-animal is yoked in a wagon, even so this spirit is yoked in this body. (Hume 272).

Thus, the body is described as "the standing ground of the deathless bodiless Atman." Like other ethereal processes such as wind, clouds, lightning, and thunder, Atman is bodiless but arises from the body. The final simile compares the relation of Atman to the body as that of a draft-animal yoked to a wagon. In other passages of the *Upanishads*, however, the language describing Atman is not so concise. In the *Maitri Upanishad*, for example Atman is described in this manner: "Incomprehensible is that supreme Soul (Atman), unlimited, unborn, not to be reasoned about, unthinkable... (Hume 435). The *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* describes Atman in the same inscrutable fashion: "That Soul (Atman) is not this , it is not that (*neti,neti)*. It is unsizable, for it is not sized. It is indestructible, for it is not destroyed. It is unattached, for it does not attach itself. It is unbound. It does not tremble. It is not injured." (Hume 125). Therefore, Atman is described as the unknowable, indescribable component of the body which transcends death.

In the *Upanishads*, the proliferation of gods which characterizes the *Vedas* is replaced by the development of Brahma as the grand unifying principle in the cosmos. Brahma's preeminence is established by a new myth in the *Mundaka Upanishad*:

> Brahma arose as the first of the gods -
> The maker of all, the protector of the world.
> He told the knowledge of Brahma, the foundation of all knowledge,
> To Atharva, his eldest son. (Hume 366).

Thus, Brahma is described as the creator, protector and foundation of all knowledge in the universe. Unlike the Vedic gods which tend to express one aspect of nature, Brahma is depicted in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* as the unifying element in the cosmos:

11. The one god, hidden in all things,

All-pervading, the Inner Soul of all things,
The overseer of deeds, in all things abiding,
The witness, the sole thinker, devoid of qualities,
12. The one controller of the inactive many,
Who makes the one seed manifold -
The Wise who perceive Him as standing in one's self -
They, and no others, have eternal happiness.
13. Him who is the constant among the inconstant, the intelligent among intelligences,
The one among many, who grants desires,
That Cause, attainable by discrimination and abstraction -
By knowing God, one is released from all fetters! (Hume 409-410).

The above quoted passage describes the unifying nature of Brahman in phrases like "hidden in all things," "all-pervading," and "the Inner Soul of all things." Brahma makes "the one seed manifold" because he reproduces his divine seed in the center of all things. Therefore, someone "who perceives Him standing in one's self" understands the nature of the universe because Brahma is "the One among the many" or the indivisible oneness at the center of creation. The *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* defines Brahma in this fashion:

> Verily, this soul is Brahma, made of knowledge, of mind, of breath, of seeing, of hearing, of earth, of water, of wind, of space, of energy and of non-energy, of desire and of non-desire, of anger and of non-anger, of virtuousness and of non-virtuousness. It is made of everything. (Hume 140).

Here is one of the several passages where Brahma is equated with soul or Atman. Also, the above quoted passage begins the long tradition of describing deity as being non-dual in nature. Hence, Brahma contains both desire and non-desire, anger and its opposite. In another place the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* describes the notion of all encompassing unity created by Brahma in the following passage:

> It (Brahmahood) is - as the uniting -place of all waters is the sea, likewise the uniting-place of all touches is the skin; likewise the uniting-place of all tastes is the tongue; likewise the uniting-place of all odors is the nose; likewise the uniting-place of all forms is the eye; likewise the uniting-place of all sounds is the ear; likewise the uniting-place of all intentions is the mind; likewise the uniting-place of all knowledges is the heart; likewise the uniting-place of all actions is the hands; likewise the uniting-place of all pleasures is the generative organ; likewise the uniting-place of all evacuations is the anus; likewise the uniting-place of

> all journeys is the feet; likewise the uniting-place of all *Vedas* is speech. (Hume 147).

Brahma is considered "the unifying-place" for all things in the same way that the ocean unifies water and the senses unify sense impressions. The significant aspect of this passage is the way in which it develops from the general ocean to the particular reliance in terms of the body's senses down to the specific "pleasures of the generative organs." Such a progression suggests to the dual aspect of Brahma as both general unifier and specific particular. For humans, according to the *Chandogya Upanishad*, the "city of Brahma" or the body is centered in "the lotus flower" of the heart:

> ...Now, what is here in this city of Brahma, is an abode, a small lotus-flower. Within that is a small space. What is within that, should be searched out; that, assuredly, is what one should desire to understand...As far, verily, as this world-space extends, so far extends the space within the heart. Within it, indeed, are contained both heaven and earth, both fire and wind, both sun and moon, lightning and the stars, both what one possesses here and what one does not possess; everything here is contained within it...That does not grow old with one's old age; it is not slain with one's murder. That is the real city of Brahma. In it desires are contained. That is the Soul (Atman), free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the Real. (Hume 262-263).

What is within the heart is the subject of the quest for Brahma. Since Brahma is located within the heart, that space is infinite or is "a world-space" which contains "heaven." Thus, the heart as the focus of meditation contains an infinite dimension similar to the infinite exterior universe because of the presence of Brahma there.

The *Upanishads* also delineate the concepts of karma and rebirth. In the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*, karma is introduced in the following passage:

> According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good. The doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action...as is his desire, such is his resolve; as is his resolve, such is the action he performs; what action (*karma*) he performs, that he procures for himself. (Hume 140).

Karma means action; so the moral implications of a persons's actions are discussed in the beginning of the above quoted passage. However, the ultimate result of karma is

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that the person "procures for himself" what he has "performed" in the actions of his or her life. Thus, the passage continues:

> Obtaining the end of his action,
> Whatever he does in this world,
> He comes again from that world
> To this world of action. (Hume 141).

This passage shows the reciprocal interaction between karma and rebirth since what ever actions an individual does in this world will return to that individual in this world implying the notion of rebirth. The concept of rebirth is made explicit in the *Chandogya Upanishad*:

> Accordingly, those who are of pleasant conduct here - the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a pleasant womb, either the womb of a Brahman, or the womb of a Kshatriya, or the womb of a Vaisya. But those who are of stinking conduct here - the prospect is, indeed, that they will enter a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine, or the womb of an outcast. (Hume 233).

This passage clearly shows that good actions will produce good rebirths, and bad actions will produce bad rebirths. A radically different moral ethos is being proscribed in this formulation of karma. And the path to liberation is proposed as the release of the soul from the cycle of rebirths: "When are liberated all/ The desires that lodge in one's heart,/ Then a mortal becomes immortal!/ Therein he reaches Brahma!" (Hume 141). In addition, the *Upanishads* strong emphasis on renunciation and mortification leads to a reaction against the worldly pleasures which are so central in the *Vedas*. Thus, a reaction against the body begins to find expression especially in the *Maitri Upanishad*:

> Sir, in this ill smelling, unsubstantial body, which is a conglomerate of bone, skin muscle, marrow, flesh, semen, blood, mucus, tears, rheum, feces, urine, wind, bile, and phlegm, what is the good of enjoyment of desires? In this body, which is afflicted with desire, anger, covetousness, delusion, fear, despondency, envy, separation from the desirable, union with the undesirable, hunger, thirst, senility, death, disease, sorrow, and the like, what is the good of enjoyment of desires?...In this sort of cycle of existence (*samsara*) what is the good of enjoyment of desires, when after a man has fed on them there is seen repeatedly his return here to earth? (Hume 413-414).

How much this passage sounds like a later Buddhist critique of the body! The division

of the body into its component parts- especially disgusting fluids like mucus, rheum, feces, and urine - is a tactic to develop a disdain for the body. Indeed, desire is condemned as leading to the Atman's imprisonment:

> Verily, freedom from desire is like the choicest extract from the choicest treasure. For, a person who is made up of all desires, who has the marks of determination, conception, and self-conceit, is bound. Hence, in being the opposite of that, he is liberated. (Hume 442).

"Freedom from desire," therefore, becomes the hallmark of what is considered the real "treasure" of the Atman. And a life concentrating on desires will result in the Atman being "bound" in the cycle of rebirth. Thus, the loathsomeness of the body becomes a main theme of the work:

> This body arises from sexual intercourse. It passes to development in hell [darkness]. Then it comes forth through the urinary opening. It is built up with bones; smeared over with flesh; covered with skin; filled with feces, urine, bile, phlegm, marrow, fat, grease, and also with many diseases, like a treasure house with wealth. (Hume 419).

The final simile in this passage indicates the disdain with which the body is viewed. The use of the treasure house as a comparison for the body is ironic because instead of treasure, the body is filled with disgusting things like fat, grease, and diseases. The argument develops by disparaging the very objects of the senses in *samasra*, or the suffering of life:

> Like the ocean tide, hard to keep back is the approach of one's death. Like a lame man - bound with the fetters made of the fruit of good and evil; like the condition of one in prison - lacking independence; like the condition of one in the realm of death - in a condition of great fear; like one intoxicated with liquor - intoxicated with delusion; like one seized by an evil being - rushing hither and thither; like one bitten by a great snake - bitten by objects of sense; like gross darkness - the darkness of passion; like jugglery - consisting of illusion (*maya-maya*); like a dream - falsely apparent; like the pith of a banana-tree - unsubstantial; like an actor - in temporary dress; like a painted scene - falsely delighting the mind. (Hume 420).

Like Plato's representation of the body as a prison house always tempting the soul towards "evils and desire," the passage quoted above uses the exact same comparison. It refers to the individual Atman as being imprisoned by the body. Disgust for the body, the illusion of the senses compared to intoxication or jugglery or

dreams, and the finality of death are proposed as the conditions of the Atman in *samsara*. Also, the antidote to these delusions is asserted a little later in the text:

> The antidote, assuredly, indeed, for this elemental soul is this: study of the knowledge of the Veda, and pursuit of one's regular duty. Pursuit of one's regular duty, in one's own stage of the religious life - that, verily, is the rule!...Therefore, by knowledge (*vidya*), by austerity (*tapis*), and by meditation (*cinta*) Brahma is apprehended. (Hume 421).

This last passage is of supreme importance because it outlines the paradigm for liberation from *samsara*. The path to liberation, therefore, involves the study of the knowledge contained in the *Vedas* and the obedience to the dharma or "regular duty" according to "one's own stage of religious life." This last phrase refers to the four traditional stages of life which include childhood, youth, maturity, and old age. *The Laws of Manu* equate these four stages with the corresponding responsibilities of student, householder, forest-dweller, and ascetic (Doniger and Smith 43). These corresponding four traditional aims of life, however, are described by Alain Daniélou in his book *Virtue, Success, Pleasure, Liberation: The Four Aims of Life in the Tradition of Ancient India* as *dharma* or virtue, *artha* or success, *kama* or pleasure, and *moksha* or liberation. (23). The importance of the concept of the four aims of life is that it posits that according to the individual's age, his or her dharma changes. In childhood, for instance, the duty requires chastity while studying as a student. During youth, learning a livelihood which will lead to success is stressed. Then, during maturity, the life of a householder and marriage is recommended. Finally, withdrawal from society, abandoning of possessions, and concentration on spiritual austerities leading towards liberation is the concern of the old.

Although the *Upanishads* do tend to depict the body as a prison house leading the soul astray, they also present a more positive role for the body during the stage of life when *kama* is the main focus of a person's life. The more positive representation of the body is evident in passages like the following creation myth from the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*:

> 1. Verily, of created things here earth is the essence; of earth, water; of water, plants; of plants, flowers; of flowers, fruits; of fruits, man (*purusa*); of man, semen.
> 2. Prajapati ('Lord of creatures') bethought himself: 'Come, let me provide him a firm basis!' So he created woman. When he had created her, he revered her below. - Therefore one should revere woman below.

> - He stretched out for himself that stone which projects. With that he impregnated her.
> 3. Her lap is a sacrificial altar; her hairs, the sacrificial grass; her skin, the soma-press. The two labia of the vulva are the fire in the middle. Verily, indeed, as great as is the world of him who sacrifices with the Vajapeya ('Strength-libation') sacrifice, so great is the world of him who practices sexual intercourse, knowing this; he turns the good deeds of woman to himself. But he who practices sexual intercourse without knowing this woman turns his good deeds unto themselves. (Hume 168).

The central concern of this creation myth is procreation which is represented as a positive thing. In addition, the depiction of sex is in the foreground of this passage. Sex is described as a ritual sacrifice of the man's "Strength-libation" on the altar of the woman. The role of women is elevated here from anything in the *Vedas* since she is represented as altar, sacrificial grass, soma-press and fire of the sacrifice. Granted, there is still the statement to "revere woman below" which suggests that besides being on the bottom of this sexual posture, she is also not revered as highly as men. The prominence of men is obvious further on in the passage when sex is discussed:

> 7. If she should not grant him his desire, he should bribe her. If she still does not grant him his desire, he should hit her with a stick or with his hand, and overcome her, saying: 'With power, with glory I take away your glory!' Thus she becomes inglorious.
> 8. If she should yield to him, he says: 'With power, with glory I give you glory!' Thus they two become glorious.
> 9. The woman whom one may desire with the thought, 'May she enjoy me!' - after inserting the member in her, joining mouth with mouth, and stroking her lap, he should mutter: -
>
> 'Thou that from every limb art come,
> That from the heart art generate,
> Thou are the essence of the limbs!
> Distract this woman here in me,
> As if by poisoned arrow pierced!'
>
> 10. Now, the woman whom one may desire with the thought, 'May she not conceive offspring!' - after inserting the member in her and joining mouth with mouth, he should first inhale, then exhale, and say: 'With power, with semen, I reclaim the semen from you!' Thus she comes to be without seed.
> 11. Now, the woman whom one may desire with the thought, 'May she conceive! - after inserting the member in her and joining mouth with mouth, he should first exhale, then inhale, and say: 'With power, with semen, I deposit semen in you!' Thus she becomes pregnant.

> 12. Now, if one's wife has a paramour, and he hates him, let him put fire in an unannealed vessel, spread out a row of reed arrows in inverse order and therein sacrifice in inverse order the reed arrows, their heads smeared with ghee... (Hume 169-170).

The codification of the rules concerning desire or *kama* in verses 7 through 9 of this passage is similar to what is later found in both *The Laws of Manu* and *The Kama Sutra*. Verses 11 and 12, on the other hand, are more involved with ritual magic since they indicate relationship between yogic breathing and the possibility of procreation in the woman after sex. Another passage where woman is represented as a sacrifice in the *Brihad-Arannayaka Upanishad* is the following:

> Woman, verily, is a sacrificial fire, O Gautama. The sexual organ, in truth, is its fuel; the hair, the smoke; the vulva, the flame; when one inserts, the coals; the feelings of pleasure, the sparks. In this oblation the gods offer semen. From this oblation a person arises. (Hume 162).

Here, the woman is used as a representation of one symbolic level of the sacrificial fire. Her body during sex is compared to the fire accepting the oblation. As a matter of fact, *kama* is represented in several passages of the *Upanishads* in a very positive manner. In another passage of the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*, there is an example where sex is depicted in a favorable fashion:

> This (the soul in deep, dreamless sleep), verily, is that form of his which is beyond desires, free from evil, without fear. As a man, when in the embrace of a beloved wife, knows nothing within or without, so this person, when in the embrace of the intelligent Soul, knows nothing within or without. Verily, that is his [true] form in which his desire is satisfied, in which the Soul is his desire, in which he is without desire and without sorrow. (Hume 136).

The above quoted passage uses the ecstasy produced by a man and his wife during sex as a comparison to the soul's state of non-duality in a death like sleep. The above quoted passage resembles a similar one concerning the intrinsic "bliss" of creation in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*: "For truly, indeed, beings here are born from bliss, when born they live by bliss, on deceasing they enter into bliss." (Hume 291). This type of analogy concerning the bliss of lovers compared to the union of the soul with Brahma becomes quite common in the later Hindu and Buddhist Tantric texts. Another example of a positive representation of *kama* is found in the *Chandogya Upanishad* where the five steps of love making are related to the fivefold Chant:

> He who knows thus this Vamadevya Saman as woven upon copulation comes to copulation, procreates himself from every copulation, reaches full length of life, lives long, becomes great in offspring and in cattle, great in fame. One should never abstain from any woman. That is his rule. (Hume 196).

This passage attempts to establish correspondence between the practice of the Vamadevya Saman chant with the practice and successful results of copulation. Both the chant and sex have extremely beneficial effects. Moreover, the statement, "One should never abstain from any woman." affirms the importance of the physical connection with women and the role of the body in everyday life.

The *Upanishads* are a group of speculative, philosophical treatises. Rather than a forward moving, logical river of arguments, they resemble an ocean which contains many waves, rip- tides, and cross-currents of thought. Throughout the text, however, the concept of sacrifice is unremittingly undercut by the knowledge concerning the meaning of the sacrifice. Also, the equation Atman equals Brahman permeates the text. For these two reasons, the dominant depiction of the body in the *Upanishads* is that of the temple which enshrines a notion of the holy because it is the body which contains the wisdom gleaned about the nature of the sacrifice and because it is the body, after all, which is also Brahma.

The Laws of Manu

Perhaps more than any other early work, *The Laws of Manu* depicts the human body as a fundamental object in the foreground of its pronouncements. *The Laws of Manu* is an encyclopedic work which delineates a myriad of rules and responsibilities for the different castes in ancient India. It is known by two names in Sanskrit, the *Manavadharmasastra* or the *Manusmrti*. (Doniger and Smith xiv). The text, composed in 2,685 *sloka*, or verses in a pattern similar to blank verse was written, probably, either some time around the beginning of the Common Era or slightly before. (Doniger and Smith xvii). Like the previous works discussed, *The Laws of Manu* begins with a creation myth which is an elaboration of the Vedic Cosmic Egg:

> Listen! [5] Once upon a time this (universe) was made of darkness, without anything that could be discerned, without any distinguishing marks, impossible to know through reasoning or understanding; it seemed to be entirely asleep. [6] Then the lord who is Self-existent, himself unmanifest, caused this (universe) to become manifest; putting his energy into the great elements and everything else, he became wise

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> and dispelled the darkness...
>
> He thought deeply, for he wished to emit various sorts of creatures from his own body; first he emitted the waters and then he emitted his semen in them. [9] That (semen) became a golden egg, as bright as the sun with his thousand rays; Brahma himself, the grandfather of all people, was born in that (egg)...
>
> [12] The Lord dwelt in that egg for a whole year, and then just by thinking, he himself divided the egg into two. [13] Out of the two fragments he made the sky and earth and the atmosphere in the middle, and the eight cardinal directions, and the eternal place of the waters. (Doniger and Smith 3-4).

To the creation of the cosmological context is quickly added the essential components of subtle and gross matter which make up a body:

> [16] But by mingling the subtle parts of the six that have boundless energy with the minute particles of his own self, he made all living things. [17] Since the six subtle parts of his physical form 'embody' these, therefore, wise men call his physical form 'the body'. [18] The gross elements enter into that with their innate activities, and the imperishable mind-and-heart that makes all living beings (enters) with its subtle parts. [19] But this (universe) arises from the subtle minute particles of the physical form of those seven Men of great energy, the perishable from the imperishable... (Doniger and Smith 5).

Thus, Brahma begins the creation of all things including the body with "minute particles of his own self." After the Brahma essence, the gross elements crystallize around the "particles"of Brahma. Later, Brahma creates the sexes from such a body:

> [32] He divided his own body into two and became a man with one half, a woman with the other half. In her the Lord emitted Viraj, [33] and that man, Viraj, generated ascetic heat and by himself emitted someone - you, who are the best of the twice-born, should know that one whom he emitted was me the creator of this whole (universe). (Doniger and Smith 7).

After establishing the universe, the notion of a body, creating the sexes, and defining the reciprocal relationship between Brahma and humans, the text proceeds to establish the laws for the all the possible variations of the types of people in the tradition caste society of India.

After establishing a cosmological order, the text in chapter two immediately defines the basic problem in society as related to desire. The interesting thing about

The Laws of Manu is that at this crucial juncture what seems to be a new position concerning desire is established which is neither completely hedonistic nor dogmatically ascetic. Here is how desire is described as fundamental to the problem:

> [2] Acting out of desire is not approved of, but here on earth there is no such thing as no desire; for even studying the *Veda* and engaging in the rituals enjoined in the *Veda* are based upon desire. [3] Desire is the very root of the conception of a definite intention, and sacrifices are the result of that intention; all the vows and the duties of restriction are traditionally said to come from the conception of a definite intention. [4] Not a single rite is ever performed here on earth by a man without desire; for each and every thing that he does is motivated by the desire for precisely that thing. [5] The man who is properly occupied in these (desires) goes to the world of the immortals, and here on earth he achieves all the desires for which he has conceived an intention (Doniger and Smith 17).

Desire, therefore, is unavoidable in the human experience. Since the study of the *Vedas* is grounded in desire, it is necessary to reorient both the hedonistic aspects found in the *Vedas* as well as the renunciation of the physical introduced in the *Upanishads*. Manu establishes a new way to deal with this dilemma:

> [94] Desire is never extinguished by the enjoyment of what is desired; it just grows stronger, like a fire that flares up with the oblation (of butter) and burns a dark path.
> [95] Someone may attain all of these (desires) and someone may reject them all, but the rejection of all desires is better than the attainment. [96] Those (sensory powers) that take voluptuous pleasure in the sensory objects cannot be restrained by non-indulgence so well as by constant understanding. [97] The Vedas, rejection (of desires), sacrifices, restraints, the generation of inner heat - they never bring who neither thrill nor recoils when he hears, touches, sees, tastes, or smells anything - he should be known as a man who has conquered his sensory powers. (Doniger and Smith 27).

Manu's point here is since enjoyment of desires never diminishes those desires but rather increases them, and since "non-indulgence" can never completely block out desire, a new synthesis is posited. "Constant understanding" of desire, its function, its proper time and place becomes the ultimate function of wisdom. Therefore, one must be free to indulge in desire but also capable of remaining simultaneously completely objective. Thus, a person neither "thrills" as a hedonist nor "recoils" as an ascetic when sensation is in question. The individual must remain neutral to sense

impressions and will, therefore, have "conquered the sensory power." Unlike the uncompromising nature of the earlier *Upanishads*, the practical nature of Manu's synthesizing conclusion is characteristic of his approach to law in general. Manu's synthesis is similar to the kind of synthesis between action and non-action which Krishna teaches as the "ideal of disciplined action" in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Miller 9).

As Manu outlines his view of society, he constantly interweaves the development of its fundamental structure with the aforementioned four stages of life: student, householder, forest dweller, and ascetic. The majority of the social conflicts are derived from the first two categories rather than the latter two which are primarily concerned with renunciation and austerities. In the early chapters, Manu warns the student to beware of women because it is their nature to be seductive:

> [213] It is the very nature of women to corrupt men here on earth; for that reason, circumspect men do not get careless and wanton among wanton women. [214] It is not just an ignorant man, but even a learned man of the world, too, that a wanton woman can lead astray when he is in the control of lust and anger. (Doniger and Smith 38-39).

In a subsequent passage he makes a similar point:

> [13] Drinking, associating with bad people, being separated from their husbands, wandering about, sleeping, and living in other people's houses are the six things that corrupt women. [14] Good looks do not matter to them, nor do they care about youth; 'A man!' they say, and enjoy sex with him, whether he is good-looking or ugly. [15] By running after men like whores, by their fickle minds, and by their natural lack of affection these women are unfaithful to their husbands even when they are zealously guarded here. [16] Knowing that their very nature is like this, as it was born at the creation by the Lord of Creatures, a man should make the utmost effort to guard them. (Doniger and Smith 198).

Hence, women are considered troublesome and wanton "by nature." Manu's conclusion, therefore, is that they must constantly be guarded to assure that they are acting properly and not committing adultery. This negative view of woman's innate wantonness pervades the text and is in sharp contrast to the more affectionate attitude which appears from time to time.

As a householder, the most important task is marriage and the production of male heirs. Thus Manu states: "Women were created to bear children, and men to carry on the line; that is why the revealed canon prescribes a joint duty (for a man)

together with his wife. (Doniger and Smith 209). Manu, therefore, has much to say on the topic of the proper wife of each particular class. Once a man has reached maturity and received the permission of his guru, he chooses a bride. According to Manu, the proper mutual ages for marriage are the following: "A thirty-year-old man should marry a twelve-year old girl who charms his heart, and a man of twenty-four an eight-year-old girl..." (Doniger and Smith 208). Reay Tannahill cites the following reasons for the Indian practice of child marriage:

> There was no single reason for this, but unmarried daughters were a liability, and since Indians (like most other peoples) regarded girls as naturally libidinous and certain to lose their virginity at the merest whisper of an opportunity, it seemed desirable to tie them to a husband before any such disaster could occur. Another factor in increasingly early marriage may well have been an increasing shortage of women (212).

In addition,Johann Jakob Meyer points out that in each marriage, the honor of three families was at stake: the mother's, the father's, and the family with whom the daughter would go to live (7). Although the marriage was contracted when the bride was still a girl, the ideal was that the bride's age be one-third of the husband's, the bride neither lived with the husband nor was the marriage consummated until the wife reached puberty. (Tannahill 213). Even after the wife reached puberty, the husband was encouraged to introduce the sexual side of marriage with extreme delicacy. (Tannahill 213). In any case, a man was required to marry a virgin from the same class who had the right marks. (Doniger and Smith 43). In addition, he should avoid those "families in which they have hairy bodies, piles, consumption, weak digestion, epilepsy, white leprosy, or black leprosy." (Doniger and Smith 43). Furthermore, Manu mentions other characteristics a man should avoid:

> [8] A man should not marry a girl who is a redhead or has an extra limb or is sickly or has no body or too much body hair or talks too much or is sallow; [9] or who is named after a constellation, a tree, or a river, or who has a low-caste name, or is named after a mountain, a bird, a snake, or has a menial or frightening name. (Doniger and Smith 44).

On the other hand, Manu does give advice on what is recommended in womanhood:

> [10] He should marry a woman who does not lack any part of her body and who has a pleasant name, who walks like a goose or an elephant, whose body hair and hair on the head is fine, whose teeth are not big, and who has delicate limbs...[12] a woman of the same class is

> recommended to twice-born men for the first marriage; but for men who are driven by desire, these are the women, in progressively descending order: [13] According to tradition, only a servant woman can be the wife of a servant; she and one of his own class can be the wife of a commoner; these two and one of his own class for a king; and these three and one of his own class for priests. (Doniger and Smith 44).

Again, if these prescriptions are not fulfilled, there are very severe punishments:

> 17 A priest who climbs into bed with a servant woman goes to hell; if he begets a son in her he loses the status of a priest...[19] No redemption is prescribed for a man who drinks the saliva from the lips of a servant woman or is tainted by her breath or begets a son in her. (Doniger and Smith 44-45).

In this passage, one can see the extreme injunctions including damnation in hell which were placed upon dalliances between members of different castes. And it is exactly for such strict caste prohibitions that *The Laws of Manu* is the book most frequently burned in protests by the most disadvantaged members of Indian society even today.(Doniger and Smith lix). The above quoted passage also suggests the supreme duty of fidelity about which Manu is also quite explicit: "'Let there be mutual absence of infidelity until death'; this should be known as the supreme duty of a man and a woman, in a nutshell." (Doniger and Smith 209). Manu informs us that should a woman be unfaithful her punishment will be to be reborn in the womb of a jackal and be tormented by diseases. (Doniger and Smith 200). Here is Manu's judgment on several causes of unfaithfulness in men: "Discharging semen into women born of the same womb as oneself, virgins, women of the lowest castes or the wife of one's friend or son, is regarded as equal to the violation of the guru's marriage-bed." (Doniger and Smith 256). And the punishment for violating the guru's marriage-bed is to "declare his error and sleep on a heated iron bed or embrace a red-hot metal cylinder" until death or "cut off his penis and testicles, hold them in his two cupped hands, and set out toward the southwest region of Ruin, walking straight ahead until he is dead." (Doniger and Smith 261). The king, on the other hand, is allowed polygamy in his harem:

> [219] Well-tested women whose clothing and ornaments have been thoroughly cleaned should attentively caress him with fans, water and incense...[221] When he has eaten, he should take his pleasure with the women in the harem, and when he has taken his pleasure at the proper time, he should think again about the things he must do. (Doniger and Smith 150).

Manu presents the ideal role of women as being completely subservient to men:

> [147] A girl, a young woman, or even an old woman should not do anything independently, even in (her own) house. [148] In childhood a woman should be under her father's control, in youth under her husband's, and when her husband is dead, under her sons'. She should not have independence. [149] A woman should not try to separate herself from her father, her husband, or her sons, for her separation from them would make both (her own and her husband's) families contemptible. [150] She should always be cheerful, and clever at household affairs; she should keep her utensils well polished and not have too free a hand in spending. [151] When her father, or her brother with her father's permission, gives her to someone, she should obey that man while he is alive and not violate her vow to him when he is dead. (Doniger and Smith 115).

Hence, the traditional role described by Manu for women is homemaker and almost nothing more. The text enjoins the development of any kind of independence in women in any stage of life. In fact, the text states later on that: "A woman is not fit for independence." (Doniger and Smith 197). Furthermore, Manu recommends the following behavior for an ideal wife: "A virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband like a god, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges his lust, and is devoid of any good qualities." (Doniger and Smith 115). No other verse more accurately communicates the gender inequities proposed by Manu. And no other phrase illuminates the chasm which exists between the sexes at this point in Indian history as well as the simile "like a god" in the the above quoted verse. And it is perhaps largely due to this stifling attitude toward women which accounts for the flocking of women to Jain and Buddhist monasteries.

Although much of the representations of women are similar to those quoted above, to be fair to Manu there are several places where he shows that women should be valued, esteemed, and even revered. He states, for example, that "A woman's mouth is always unpolluted, as is a bird that knocks down a fruit...(Doniger and Smith 113). In a similar passage he describes a very positive role to women when he says: "There is no difference at all between the goddesses of good fortune who live in houses and women who are the lamps of their houses, worthy of reverence and greatly blessed because of their progeny." (Doniger and Smith 200). Here women are

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depicted as goddesses of the house who are deserving of "reverence" and are "blessed." In addition, the metaphor of the women who are compared to the " lamp of their houses" is one of the most positive Manu employs for them. One other example of such a positive passage concerning women would be the following:

> [55] Fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law who wish for great good fortune should revere these women and adorn them. [56] The deities delight in places where women are revered, but where women are not revered all rites are fruitless. [57] Where the women of the family are miserable, the family is soon destroyed, but it always thrives where the women are not miserable. [58] Homes that are cursed by women of the family who have not been treated with due reverence are completely destroyed, as if struck down by witchcraft. [59] Therefore men who wish to prosper should always revere these women with ornaments, clothes, and food at celebrations and festivals. (Doniger and Smith 48-49).

The reverence for women touted for women in the passage quoted above seems rather superficial since it seems to be based upon "ornaments, clothes, and food at celebrations and festivals." This token reverence appears to be more like mere tolerance. However, one place the reciprocity between men and women which Manu takes seriously is their roles as sex partners:

> [60] There is unwavering good fortune in a family where the husband is always satisfied by the wife, and the wife by the the husband. [61] If the wife is not radiant she does not stimulate the man; and because the man is unstimulated the making of children does not happen. [62] If the woman is radiant, the whole family is radiant, but if she is not radiant the whole family is not radiant. (Doniger 49).

Generally, Manu is silent on the topic of how to produce and maintain this radiance in women; however, he is quite candid about sex. He points out the best time to have sex for procreation:

> [45] A man should have sex with his wife during her fertile season, and always find his satisfaction in his own wife; when he desires sexual pleasure he should go to her to whom he is vowed, except on the days at the (lunar) junctures. [46] The natural fertile season of women is traditionally said to last for sixteen nights, though these include four special days that good people despise...[48] On the even nights, sons are conceived, and on the uneven nights, daughters; therefore a man who wants sons should unite with his wife during her fertile season on the even nights. (Doniger and Smith 48).

The "four special days that good people despise" relates to the taboo against menstruation. Manu is not ambiguous in other places about the topic of menstruation in other passages:

> [40] Even if he is out of his mind (with desire) he should not have sex with a woman who is menstruating; he should not even lie down in the same bed with her. [42] A man who has sex with a woman awash in menstrual blood loses his wisdom, brilliant energy, strength, eyesight, and long life. [42] By shunning her when she is awash in menstrual blood, he increases his wisdom, brilliant energy, strength, eyesight, and long life. [43] He should not eat with his wife, nor watch her when she eats, sneezes, yawns, or sits down to relax. (Doniger and Smith 78).

Hence, menstruation, along with bestiality and homosexuality, is regarded among the strongest sexual taboos. Nor is Manu ambiguous about the punishment for such an offense: "If a man has shed his semen in non-human females, in a man, in a menstruating woman, in something other than a vagina, or in water, he should carry out the 'Painful Heating' vow." (Doniger and Smith 268). The Painful Heating vow, as we have already seen, consists of sleeping on a red hot iron bed or embracing a heated metal cylinder.

The Laws of Manu is a work which is primarily concerned with the everyday praxis of practical people who face the ordinary problems of life. The codified solutions to these problems are proposed in an organized, reasonable manner. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* serve as a backdrop against which the laws are highlighted. The depictions of the body within the text vary. When the weaknesses of the body are being exaggerated, the body appears like a prison-house which urges one to transgress the accepted norms. On the other hand, when moral strengths of the body's conduct are described, the depiction is more representative of a temple in which the purity of dharma dwells.

The Kama Sutra

The Kama Sutra does not delineate the ritual importance of sacrifice like the *Vedas*; nor does it discuss the importance of yogic states and their relationship to the quest for Brahma like the *Upanishads*; nor does it discuss the importance of *praxis* between the individual and the group which is at the heart of *The Laws of Manu*. Rather, *The Kama Sutra* is a work which analyzes the types, methodologies, and emotions of love. Like similar works in other cultures such as Jung-Ch'en's *Principles*

of Sex, Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, and Shaykh Nefzawi's *The Perfumed Garden for the Soul's Recreation*, *The Kama Sutra*, on one level, is a "how to" book or manual concerning the physical art of lovemaking. It describes, for example, seven hundred and twenty-nine varieties of kisses (Lal 68). In fact, it is still given to young brides to be read before the wedding night in India. (Sinha 8). *The Kama Sutra* was not considered an irreligious work; rather, it taught the foundations of an art which was studied by both men and women, and such study was deemed normal and respectable. (Douglas and Slinger 22-23). But is Vatsyayana's work only a sex manual? Some critics like Georg Feuerstein believe so: "*The Kama Sutra*," he maintains, "was intended as a guide for the well-to-do urbanite who wanted to take the boredom out of his love life. We can almost regard it as a playboy's manual with a superficial moral tinge." (159). On the other hand, several authors offer a more expansive view of the text's aim. Shobita Punja, for one, describes the work as teaching control over passion:

> *The Kamasutra*, the science of desire, and a number of similar texts on the art of lovemaking, stress the need to understand all aspects of sensual pleasure so it is in command, not merely driven by passion. *The Kamasutra* delves into the intricacies of love and fulfillment. To gain lasting pleasure, it is first necessary to remove ignorance. One cannot attain what one does not understand. The art of love-making is not merely copulation. *The Kamasutra* speaks of several related arts: decorating the room with fragrant flowers, scents for the body, acquiring the art of witty conversation, music, painting, cooking and self knowledge, to be able to provide pleasure to another. (178-179).

Thus, Punja insightfully recognizes *The Kama Sutra's* aim is to integrate sensual passion into the totality of personality in such a way that it is under control by the mind and body rather than vice-versa. The other arts which Shobita Punja mentions are from among the sixty-four arts enumerated in *Kama Sutra*. These sixty-four arts were to be studied along with *The Kama Sutra* ideally under the instruction of a teacher. The benefits derived from the study of these arts included the recognition by society that such culture would be inspirational with greater success in amorous affairs that the application of these arts could assure the added possibilities for self-employment arising from such polished charm and sophistication. (Douglas and Slinger 22). Hence, the body in this scheme is viewed more as a tool or instrument which if used properly will produce the desired effect in both one's personal life and in society in general. Vatsyayana states the importance of his teachings in this way:

> But, no matter how skilled you are
> in other sciences, you cannot
> if ignorant of these arts, command respect
> among the wise, nor complete
> the triple quest for Dharma, Artha and Kama. (Sinha 90).

Clearly, Vatsyayana intends for these teachings to be more than mere sensual diversions. In fact, he warns about the dangers of leading an undisciplined life: "It can be observed that those who give themselves over to an exaggerated sexual life destroy themselves as well as their relations." (Daniélou, *The Complete Kama Sutra*, 42). Indra Sinha also interprets the text as conveying more than a "playboy's manual:"

> *Kama Sutra*...is very far from being merely a sex manual. Only one book of its seven deals with the techniques of physical lovemaking. The rest cover subjects as diverse as how to furnish and decorate a house, how to woo a bride, how husbands and wives are to behave to each other, how religious festivals are to celebrated, the kitchen provisioned and the garden planted. *Kama Sutra* is an attempt, the earliest extant, to define the whole relationship between a man and a woman.
>
> At the heart of this relationship, of course, is the sexual act. The questions *Kama Sutra* sets out to answer are: with whom should this act be performed, under what circumstances should it be performed, and how it should be performed? The approach, therefore, is that of a *shastra*, or scientific text...(8).

As Sinha points out, *The Kama Sutra* is essentially a work which explores the various possibilities of deepening a relationship. All of the fuss and misunderstandings have been generated by the objective, scientific depictions contained in the second chapter which concerns the diverse couplings possible for lovers. Vatsyayana's own claim concerning the work's aim is simply stated: "Vatsyayana has composed in sutras,/ to elevate the study of love to a science." (Sinha 184). No equivalent work which establishes the art of sex has ever influenced the West, and, therefore, the notion of the art of sex is completely alien (Douglas and Slinger 22).

The Kama Sutra is written in a versified form (sutra) as an aid to memorization (Daniélou, *The Complete Kama Sutra*, 5). Many other technical works were written in this aphoristic manner such as Panini's famous grammar, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, and Patanjali's yoga teachings. Although the work is written in verse, as Tannahill points out, it is bereft of poetry: "There is no poetry at all in the *Kamasutra*, no mellowing use of that romantic-spiritual language that has encouraged lovers through the ages to

believe that their own feelings are something quite apart from the gross bodily desires of others."(204). Although the style is not poetic, there are verses in the text which are memorable:

> No man or woman will ever know
> exactly what the other feels while making love;
> no words will ever describe it,
> but man's pleasure is ended by orgasm
> while woman's pleasure never comes to an end. (Sinha 42).

> If you wish to express love for a lady
> to whom you dare not speak
> and kiss her reflection in a lake or a mirror,
> or her shadow on a wall,
> it is *Chaya-Chumbana*, the Kiss of Shadows. (Sinha 52).

In the last two lines of the first passage above, Vatsyayana seems to have come to the same conclusion as Tiresias! Other passages are psychologically insightful:

> Man's nature has always been to crow
> 'I am making love!',
> while she coos 'This man is making love with me!';
> but the pleasure, when it comes,
> cannot tell which is the woman, which the man. (Sinha 44).

> Nothing addles wits faster than sex:
> the cravings and fantasies
> that float unbidden into a man's imagination
> when he's making love are weirder,
> by far, even than the grotesqueries of his dreams. (Sinha 82).

Yet other passages recommend a tempering of the learned application of Vatsyayana's teachings with spontaneity:

> The texts on love can only be useful
> while desire is still,
> but once that potter's wheel begins to turn,
> my dears, throw down even *Kama Sutra*,
> for then there is no law, no rules, no science. (Sinha 48).

> But Vatsyayana says once passion
> is aroused there is little time for protocol.
> You may do whatever you like
> whenever you please, since Kama
> respects no conventions and can't be regimented. (Sinha 50).

Therefore, although the content of the work is frequently ecstatic, the style of the *Kama Sutra* is characterized by its restrained, objective analysis of the physical and psychological aspects of love.

Vatsyayana was a Brahman and a man of letters who lived in the city of Pataliputra around the Fourth century C.E. (Daniélou, *The Complete Kama Sutra*, 4). Daniélou describes the work's origin in the following way:

> According to Vatsyayana, the various works belonging to the Kama *Shastra* had become difficult to access. For this reason, he undertook to collect them and summarize them in his *Kama Sutra*, which thus became the classic work on the subject.
>
> It was while staying in the city of Benares for the purposes of religious study that he managed to collect the works from which he drew his inspiration and from which he quotes important passages. The *Kama Sutra* thus describes the customs of the Maurya period (fourth century B.C.), revived during the Gupta period (fourth century A.D.). The fact that the *Kama Sutra* is a compilation of works of the Maurya period explains the similarities in composition and style with the *Artha Shastra* of Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta, as well as the numerous references to this work.
>
> The *Kama Sutra* does not claim to be an original work, but a compilation. Vatsyayana states, on the other hand, that he himself had checked through personal experience the practices he describes. (*The Complete Kama Sutra*, 4).

As a compilation, the *Kama Sutra* functions not so much as an author's unique composition but the culmination of a tradition which dates, by the way, almost back to the Buddha's time. Therefore, Vatsyayana was desperately trying to preserve the *Kama Shastra* tradition.

Like the other Indian classics quoted above, *The Kama Sutra* also begins with a kind of creation myth:

> 1-2 Praised be the three aims of life, virtue [dharma], prosperity [artha], and love [kama], which are the subject of this work.
> 3-4 I also salute the sages of old, who expounded the concepts of their own time concerning our subject.
> 5 Prajapati, the Lord of the Creatures, after creating man, composed a treatise of one hundred thousand verses, defining the rules of social life at the triple level of civic virtue, prosperity, and sexuality.
> 6 Manu, the son of the god born of himself, set aside the aphorisms concerning civic virtues and ethics in his *Dharma Shastra*.

> 7 Brihaspati set aside the aphorisms concerning politics, economy, and posterity in his *Artha Shastra*.
> 8 Shiva's companion, Nandi, set aside the one thousand chapters concerning sexuality, thus creating the *Kama Shastra*. (Daniélou 15-19).

The quotation above begins by delineating the three aims of life, the *trivarga*, which are dharma, artha, and kama. If practiced correctly, they lead to moska, or liberation which is the final of the *purusarthas*, or goals of life (Spellman 15). Next, Vatsyayana "salutes" the sages who have previously written on the topic of love, the tradition which he is trying to preserve with his text. In the fifth line, the creation of mankind by Prajapati is mentioned. Immediately after creating man, Prajapati is said to have composed a treatise which defined the roles of dharma, artha and kama in peoples' lives. Manu developed the knowledge of virtue in his *Dharma Shastra;* Brihaspati developed the knowledge of prosperity in his *Artha Shastra;* and Nandi, Shiva's vehicle, developed the knowledge of love by writing the first *Kama Shastra*. Nandi's role in the *Kama Shastra* tradition is explained by Indra Sinha in this way: "Legend has it that when Shiva and his wife Parvati were locked away making love for a thousand years, Nandi was inspired to utter the *Kama* teachings, which fell like flowers from his lips. As one learned professor remarked to me: 'No-one will ever know if Nandi peeked.'"(11). Since it was Kama who brought Siva and Parvati together, the concept of kama or love had been transformed from an abstraction to a deity by the time that *The Kama Sutra* is composed. John W. Spellman describes how this process occurs in the Indian ethos in the following passage:

> Hinduism personifies a number of abstract qualities. Gods become the embodiment of a particular quality, such as the Vedic god Varuna being the lord of Dharma and water. Justice or punishment (*dabda*) is also anthropomorphized as the god Danda. Kama, the Indian god of love and sexual desire, shoots his flower arrows from a bow made of sugar cane strung with a row of bees. Like Eros, this youthful Indian god of love shoots his flowery arrows without regard to caste, customs, or public opinion. No one, whether mortal or god, has ever been able to ignore the shafts of Kama or, as his is sometimes known, Ananga (the Body-less One). Even the great god Siva was not entirely immune from him...(Spellman 19-20).

Like Eros and Cupid in the West, Kama becomes a tender juggernaut who cannot be resisted by mortals nor gods as Siva's case aptly proved.

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Like the *Upanishads* and *The Laws of Manu*, *The Kama Sutra* also adheres to the three aims of life:

1 During the one hundred years of his life, a man must pursue the three aims successively, without one being prejudicial to another.
2 Childhood must be dedicated to acquiring knowledge.
3 Eroticism predominates in adulthood.
4 Old age must be dedicated to the practice of virtue and spiritual pursuit (moksha).
5 Since life's duration is uncertain, all opportunities must be taken advantage of.
6 Celibacy is recommended during the period of study, for the acquiring of knowledge. (Daniélou, *The Complete Kama Sutra*, 26).

In the first verse, the significant point is made that each aim of life must be pursued at the proper time "without one being prejudicial to another." Therefore, Kama does not override the other aims; rather, it is inferior to the other two aims. Later in the text Vatsyayana describes the relative importance of all these three aims:

> The relative importance and value of things must be taken into account. Money is more important than love, social success more important than success in love, and virtue is more important than success and fortune. (Daniélou, *The Complete Kama Sutra*, 31).

Therefore, when the proper time for the study of kama arrives, here is what Vatsyayana recommends:

1 Without curtailing the time dedicated to studying spiritual and material subjects and related sciences, a man should also study erotic science, the *Kama Shastra* and its annexes.
2 A woman should study even before reaching adolescence, and then, once married, should continue her studies with her husband.
3 The ancient authors consider that since women are incapable of understanding the sciences, it is useless to teach them such things.
4 Vatsyayana notes that they can understand practical science and that practice depends entirely on theory. (Daniélou, *The Complete Kama Sutra*, 45-48).

As he does elsewhere in the text, Vatsyayana shows a slightly more enlightened view regarding the women's potential for learning in the erotic sciences. Clearly, women are encouraged to read on the subject from an early age which is more than they are encouraged to do in any other field of study. And the reading of the *Kama Shastra* was a starting point to introduce them to the sixty-four arts which will further cultivate

them. In general, the role of women is expanding from what we have found in any of the other works investigated above. Although women were still dominated by fathers, husbands, and sons in the traditional family, there began to develop areas where a woman might become independent. Besides becoming a wife or a prostitute, there were other possible modes of behavior which were not deemed unrespectable. Reay Tannahill explains such possibilities in this way: "This was partly because early Hinduism, unlike Christianity, for example, had no absolute morality, very little concept of *unconditional* right and wrong in terms of human relations." (202).

The Kama Sutra by Vatsyayana uses the vehicle of the body as the fundamental instrument through which the supreme sensations of the third aim of life or kama may be experienced. Whereas dharma and artha are more involved with worldly, intellectual pursuits, kama concerns the intimate knowledge of the body:

> Dharma is lived
> outwardly by observing the word of the *Vedas*,
> by, for instance, sacrificing and forsaking meat;
> inwardly by practicing the yoga texts
> and being in the presence of great teachers.
>
> Artha is education, houses, land, grain, cattle,
> gold, clothes, jewels, friends, the arts,
> gaining, husbanding and multiplying wealth.
> Farmers and rich merchants can teach it,
> but its greatest experts are the king's tax men.
>
> Kama is the delight of body, mind and soul
> in exquisite sensation:
> awaken eyes, nose, tongue, ears, skin,
> and between sense and sensed
> the essence of Kama will flower. (Sinha 20).

Kama, therefore, involves the awakening of the senses through "delight of body, mind and soul; " but of these three, the body is always in the foreground as the central image. One way or another, the body is manipulated into ecstasy while the mind serves as the ultimate amplifier of pleasure. The soul, on the other hand, is not essential during this stage of life and is rarely mentioned. Indra Sinha explains the text's focus on the body in this way:

> The lists of techniques provide sensations which can be chosen and savored like delicacies from a gourmet menu. This need not be

> contrived and unspontaneous as it sounds. We could regard the techniques as a grammar of love that has to be mastered before one can express oneself with fluency and felicity. Or, more aptly perhaps, as five finger exercises in *raga* and *tala* which need practicing before music can be made. (9).

Thus, "a grammar of love" must be mastered; and the body is the horn-book. Sinha develops the simile in which lovemaking is compared to making music when she states that: "lovemaking should flow, like a *raga* played by an Indian *ustad*, from one perfectly executed figure to the nest, improvised but effortless." (9). She goes on to make a fascinating comparison between lovemaking and yoga and dance:

> In *hatha-yoga* also, and in the dance, we encounter positions (also called *asanas*) which are held for a few moments and which then flow into the next. We know that Bharata's *Natyashastra*, the seminal work on Indian dance, profoundly influenced at least the medieval writers on love, but the relationship between *hatha-yoga* and the love texts has never been sufficiently explored. They have in common that they call their physical exercises *asanas* and *bandhas;* Vatsyayana cites *Padmasana* (the Lotus Posture), the most famous of all yoga postures, as one of his positions. And dozens of the medieval lovemaking postures are clearly yoga derived. (9).

Like a yoga routine in which the practitioner executes a series of postures or like a dancer who undulates with gesticulations which narrate a particular story, Sinha believes that Vatsyayana meant to suggest a confluence of physical variations - following the other - which would enhance and elaborate the flow of lovemaking. Hence, the grammar of love would be worked into intricate paragraphs of delight.

Throughout both dharma and artha, the mind is central while the body is a mere vehicle for knowledge. But now, the body is the knowledge to be gained and the vehicle for its practice:

> It is the breath of lip on lip,
> the caresses of breasts, hips, buttocks, thighs
> in the beautiful embrace
> from which a child is born:
> learn it from *Kama Sutra* and the world. (Sinha 20).

"The beautiful embrace" is the subject of much of the work. But it is not only the postures of lovemaking which are placed in the foreground of the text. Rather, it is the entire electrifying experience of mastering the intricate tangle of emotions and sensual

pleasures:

> Kama can be terrifying to those
> with deeply-rooted fears
> or inhibitions.
> The love teachings free men and women
> to accept each other's emotions without fear.
>
> Kama is powerful.
> It can wreck marriages and reputations,
> but the couple who study its arts
> become lovers of such skill
> that their love can never be destroyed.
>
> Kama is blind in animals,
> mere rutting while the females are in heat,
> but men and women
> who know its yoga
> embrace infinity in their lovemaking. (Sinha 20).

In these three verses, Vatsyayana warns the reader about the power of kama. However, the work teaches how to overcome inhibitions and to freely accept the other's emotions. In addition, through the "skill" learned from the text, an indestructible love can be formed. Here, the word love does not only mean the physical act, but also all the habits of tenderness as well. Reay Tannahill comments on this aspect of love in Vatsyayana:

> But although sex often figured in love poetry, love figured very little in sex literature before the *Kamasutra*. Then, however, it was recurring there.
>
> By the word "love" the *Kamasutra* did not mean the artificial sighing and yearning, the coquettishness, the simulated passion, the calculated tricks of the amorous trade that were so notable a feature of Ovid's understanding of it, but a great deal more. Clearly, Vatsyayana... not only recognized but sympathized with that curious tangle of emotions, that chemical reaction between man and woman - always commonplace, always unique - that can obsess the mind and nerves of the lover to the exclusion of all else. More than once, the sage interrupts himself in the middle of a discourse on sexual tactics to remind his readers that the rules do not apply for people who are truly in love, or to point out that whatever he may say about the qualities to be looked for in a wife, a man should marry "no other girl but the one who is loved." (203).

Vatsyayana's sympathetic view toward love is one of the work's more compelling aspects. However, it is not the only area in which Vatsyayana is innovative.

Vatsyayana makes at least two other innovations in his *Kama Sutra*. When the question of women's orgasm is discussed, Vatsyayana makes a point of going against tradition by claiming that women do indeed experience such a thing:

> Since man and woman are both human,
> both engrossed in the same act,
> why on earth should their pleasures differ?
> Vatsyayana concludes
> that women have an orgasm just as men do. (Sinha 44).

In addition, Vatsyayana describes homosexuality in the following way:

1 People of the third sex [*trityia prakriti*] are of two kinds, according to whether their appearance is masculine or feminine.

2 Those with a feminine appearance show it by their dress, speech laughter, behavior, gentleness, lack of courage, silliness [*mugdha*], patience and modesty. (Daniélou, *The Complete Kama Sutra,* 182).

The sensitivity and understanding with which Vatsyayana objectively treats the variety of uninhibited aspects of kama reveals *The Kama Sutra's* most endearing quality - its grasp of love's complex diversity.

In ancient India, the body conveyed a variety of different meanings depending on the time and text. In the *Vedas, Brahmanas,* and *Upanishads,* the body manifested a sacred aspect, whereas in The *Laws of Manu* and *The Kama Sutra* more social and individual aspects were depicted. The *Vedas* and *The Brahmanas* present the body as a sacrifice which creates the universe, participates in its joys and sorrows, and maintains its balance through ritual. The *Upanishads* internalize the notion of sacrifice by introducing the physical austerities, yogic discipline, and meditation necessary for union with Brahma. The body is depicted as a vehicle through which one may attain an experience of the divine unity. *The Laws of Manu* represent the body in social *praxis:* and according to these laws, a balance must be established between asceticism and desire. Therefore, since Manu conceives of life as a series of stages through which each person passes, each of the stages of life require a different role for the body. During youth, one must remain chaste and concentrate on acquiring wisdom and learning a livelihood; during adulthood, one must experience the sensual delights which include marriage, lovemaking, producing offspring, and establishing a family ; and during old age, focus on the asceticism of spiritual liberation. *The Kama*

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Sutra delineates the body's techniques for achieving ecstasy. It unabashedly represents the intricate states of desire. In later art work, such descriptions of lovemaking are rendered in the erotic motifs of the *mithuna*, or couple or pair who may or may not be involved in sex, and the *maithuna* couple, who are engaged in sex (Desai 7). Such motifs become commonplace in temple construction throughout India. These motifs spread as far away as Nepal where the *maithuna* couple is employed to ward off lightning, repel demons, and represent the union with the divine (Marjupuria 21). The lifestyle devoted to pleasure which *The Kama Sutra* extols is exactly what the the Jains and Buddhists later challenge. They disparage physical pleasure and teach that only suffering is caused by attachments. For them, the body is viewed more as it is in the Upanishads - as an instrument which must be disciplined in order to attain liberation. On the other hand, both the *bhakti* and tantric movements had much to learn from Vatsyayana.

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